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THE INDEPENDENT

Tuesday 14 October 1997

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INSIDE TODAY

15/HEALTH

Back pain: the doctor with an answer at his fingertips

19/GIRL POWER

Our answer to GQ

TODAY'S NEWS

PM jostled in Ulster

The Prime Minister was jeered and jostled by angry loyalists in Belfast yesterday, after he had shaken hands with Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein leader. Mr Adams had told Tony Blair that he hoped he would be the last British prime minister with jurisdiction in Ireland after the first such handshake since Lloyd George met Michael Collins in 1921. But anti-IRA protesters yelled 'traitor' at Mr Blair and told him his hands were covered in blood when he visited a shopping centre later. Page 5

Brent Spar won't sink

The Brent Spar oil storage tank, which Greenpeace forced Shell not to dispose of at sea, is likely to be broken up on land in Norway. Page 9

Alzheimer's discovery

Oxford scientists have made a breakthrough in the understanding of Alzheimer's disease. The interaction of two genes, which are carried by one in 15 of the population, greatly increase the risk of getting the degenerative disease. This may help doctors to interrupt it; but also raises important ethical questions about testing for it. Page 3

Egypt's rebel war

For five years Egypt has been struggling with the uprising of Islamic militants in a savage conflict which has caused 1,100 deaths. The Islamic movement had broken apart and President Mubarak was boasting of success. But the latest hard line taken by Israel against Hamas has made things dramatically tougher for the Egyptian government. Robert Fisk, Page 12

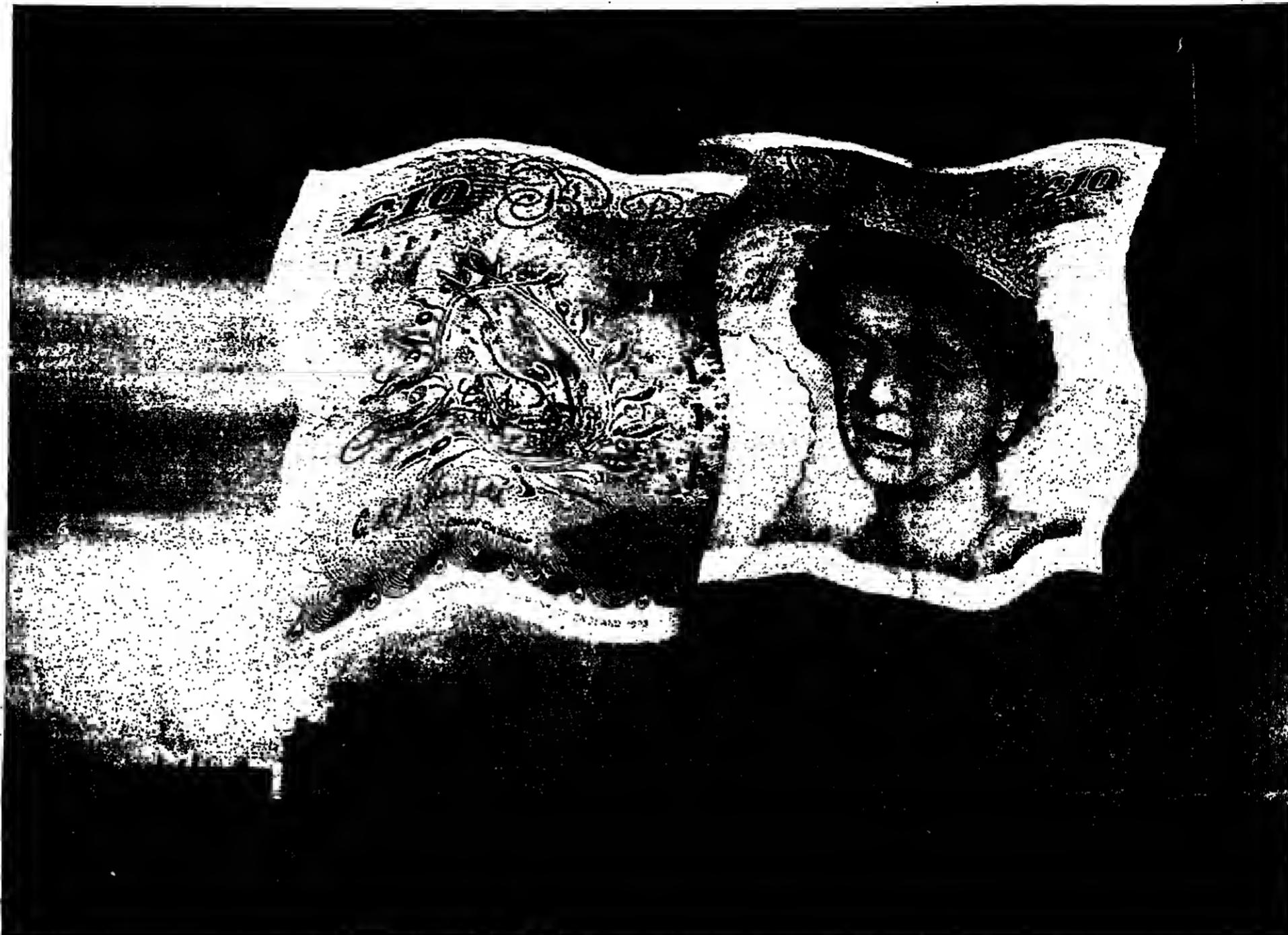
SEEN & HEARD

A dose of spirits can cure heart disease, doctors have discovered. When injected internally, a dram of pure alcohol can restore a damaged heart and have its owner back popping up the bar quicker than you can say Glenfiddich. The novel treatment has been used successfully on 300 patients at the Royal Brompton hospital in London and is attracting world-wide interest. Patients remain awake despite being dosed with liquid at twice the alcoholic strength of normal spirits. It is introduced via a catheter in a keyhole treatment direct to the heart for sufferers from a condition called hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy, which affects 12,000 people. Apparently bashing the thickened muscle in pure alcohol destroys it, with results as effective as open heart surgery.

WEATHER The Eye, page 10
TELEVISION The Eye, page 12
CROSSWORDS Page 32 and the Eye, page 9

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Dropping the Pound: Blair, Brown clash on the biggest issue of all



A damaging rift has opened between the Prime Minister and Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, over membership of the European single currency. Our Political Editor reports on the makings of a political and economic crisis.

The Treasury is trying to bounce Tony Blair into a decision which could lead to the early death of the pound. Sources close to the Chancellor of the Exchequer are actively briefing selected reporters that Mr Blair is poised to announce early membership of the single currency, as soon as possible after the first-wave launch in 1999.

The briefing was again repudiated by the Prime Minister's office yesterday, but the repeated reports are feeding City and Tory suspicion that Parliament, the markets and the voters are being softened up for the abolition of sterling.

In fact there are signs that the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, could be over-reaching himself, by trying to bounce the Prime Minister, the country and ster-

ling into a single currency. Mr Brown, who is said to regard himself as the Government's managing director - with Mr Blair as non-executive chairman - could be underestimating the Prime Minister's political determination not to repeat past mistakes, particularly the disastrous decision to join the European Exchange Rate Mechanism in 1990.

While Mr Blair appears content to give the Chancellor his brief on issues like Bank of England independence on interest rates, he has been known to veto some of Mr Brown's more headstrong judgements - like his pre-election plan to introduce a 50p higher-rate income tax band for the better-off.

Mr Blair rejected that proposal because it smacked of the high-tax image Labour had fatally presented to the voters in 1997, under Neil Kinnock.

The Prime Minister maintains a highly political caution about early membership of the single currency, and Mr Brown is risking the kind of open split between No 10 and No 11 that led to the eventual resignations as Chancellor, of Peter Thorneycroft in 1957, and Nigel Lawson in 1989.

Some ministers say Mr Blair would want to square Rupert Murdoch and his newspapers - particularly the Euro-phobic

BY ANTHONY BEVINS

Sun - before he even thought of putting the single currency issue to a referendum of the electorate, as promised in the May manifesto.

But a Treasury-inspired report in yesterday's *Daily Mail* said Mr Blair would use the opportunity offered by a

added more than £30bn to London share values, and knocked four pence off the value of the pound.

The *Financial Times* report was heavily denied by the Prime Minister's office at the time, with a spokesman saying it was "speculation, but wrong. There

"He has put enormous pressure on the Prime Minister who has prevaricated for months over a decision he fears could make or break his premiership."

The line from No 10 was, again, that the Government's position had not changed. Mr Blair told *The Independent* last month: "We have said that we will keep the option [of joining a single currency], and we will obviously keep it open ...

"If we want to retain any influence in shaping the debate on the single currency, then it is essential that we remain open to the possibility of entry, though as I have said before I think it is highly unlikely that we will be in the first wave."

Because European Union members will have to make a judgement by next spring on which countries can join in the first wave, the Government will have to make a statement before the end of the year on whether it plans to apply for first-wave membership.

The British option does not require an early commitment to membership - although even the most Euro-sceptic ministers, like Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, have said it would be difficult, if not impossible, to remain outside a proven, successful single currency.

Peter Lilley, the shadow Chancellor, said yesterday: "If it is not in Britain's interests to join now, it would be illogical to commit us now to definitely join at some future date."

But he added: "Once again, the Labour government is playing party politics with critical constitutional decisions."

"The British people are entitled to clear, on-the-record statements from the Chancellor, rather than off-the-record briefings to the press by Mr Brown's spin-doctor-in-chief, Charlie Whelan."

At a meeting with EU colleagues in Luxembourg yesterday, Mr Brown himself stuck rigidly to the official government line.

It was "very unlikely", he said, that the United Kingdom would join the euro at the start of 1999, because of the "formidable obstacles" the switch from the pound to the euro would present.

Mr Brown then avoided any predictions about the future, insisting that the Government's wait-and-see position had not changed.

Mr Lilley said: "They know that they cannot win the argument for joining a single currency in the foreseeable future openly, so their policy for the pound is death by a thousand briefings ..."

INSIDE: WHO'LL WIN?

"It would not be surprising if on those occasions when Tony Blair and Gordon Brown do have differences, Brown sometimes gets his own way. But on most of the big issues the Prime Minister has eventually got his way when it counted."

Donald Macintyre, page 21

Letters, page 20

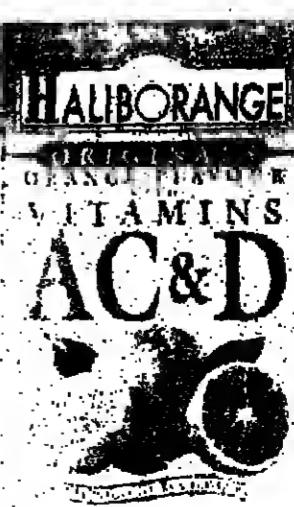
Business, page 25

European summit in Luxembourg on 21 November to announce the decision to join the single currency "as soon as possible" after its 1999 launch. Although it provided more detail, the *Mail* report was virtually identical to a front-page story carried by the *Financial Times* on 26 September - which is no change in government policy.

It was also denied by the Treasury, which described it less robustly as "speculation". But yesterday's *Mail* said: "Mr Blair's move is a victory for Gordon Brown, a long-time enthusiast for a single currency.

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COLUMN ONE

Weathering the storm of a fishy business

As quotes go, it is probably one that Michael Fish would rather forget. "Today a woman apparently rang the BBC and said she heard that there was a hurricane on the way," he announced, 10 years ago tomorrow. "But if you are watching, don't worry - there isn't."

Less than 24 hours later, a hurricane tore across the south coast of England in a four-hour frenzy that killed 19 people, ripped up 15 million trees and caused billions of pounds worth of damage.

But on a programme about the night of 15 October, Mr Fish, who is affectionately known as "Mr Polyester" because of his striking taste in suits, now claims that he never said there would not be a hurricane. On *Storm of the Century*, to be broadcast on Radio 2 tonight, Mr Fish says it was the media that got it wrong.

"The woman referred to was talking about a potential hurricane in Florida that had been mentioned in the news. The Met Office got it spectacularly wrong, but I was only one of the messengers," he says in the interview. Bearing in mind the number of times the television clip has been replayed, this would be a tough argument to win at the best of times. The footage is currently being shown to flag a television programme about the storm. But Mr Fish has another problem - his Nemesis, in the shape of the person behind that fateful telephone call, has also come back to haunt him.

The woman who made the call is Anita Hart, 46, from north-west London. It was her son, Gaon, who, while doing meteorology as part of a geography degree, compiled the weather forecast that prompted Mrs Hart's call.

In a "join-the-dots" weather prediction, of a kind he often made for his parents, he had warned them not to go on a planned caravan trip to Wales after seeing what looked like a severe storm approaching. They reacted with disbelief, thinking that anything so serious would surely have been noted elsewhere, and decided to call the BBC. Hence the fateful call, he says, to Michael Fish.

Mrs Hart is currently travelling and could not comment yesterday. But Gaon Hart, now a lawyer, said the pair were astonished to hear of Mr Fish's denial.

"My mother actually spoke to Michael Fish because she called the BBC and was accidentally put through to him. She never mentioned anything about Florida, and nor did he when the forecast went out," Mr Hart, 31, said yesterday.

"It's coincidental indeed that he happens to get a phone call about one hurricane and another in Florida on the same day," he observed. "It just doesn't add up." His mother, he said, had even become an answer to a Trivial Pursuit question, in an American version of the game. All things considered, he could find little explanation for why Mr Fish had suddenly decided to speak out.

"I think he's realised that it's going to haunt him for the rest of his days. I don't want to be nasty - perhaps he legitimately doesn't remember... But it's on the record and it did happen," Mr Hart said that neither he nor his mother wished Mr Fish any ill-will, despite the obvious disparities between what they and the weatherman say happened.

"My mum's going to find it amusing. She finds it all very amusing. In fact, she feels sorry for him."

Whatever the truth, there is one possible explanation for Mr Fish's apparent keenness to separate his professional image from those notorious quotes. In June it was reported that the weatherman had been recruited by Florida meteorologists to help spot hurricanes threatening Miami. He was said to be part of a new "co-operation pact" between the Meteorological Office in Bracknell, Berkshire, and the Florida authorities, which are keen to deploy both British supercomputers and staff expertise.

Michael Fish could not be reached to comment last night.

— Jojo Moyes

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PEOPLE



ANDREW BLAUGHAN

Spare teddy bear wins £2,000 for author

Andy Blackford, above, winner of *The Independent* and Scholastic Children's Books Story of the Year competition, yesterday received a £2,000 prize for his winning entry *Spare Bear*.

Mr Blackford, 47, wrote his book after "downshifting" last year from a career in advertising to pursue his writing. He is the author of five published works, including a biography of Tyneside rock group The Animals. He has always enjoyed writing for children, but it was the arrival of his third child two years ago and the "jail sentence" of "the prospect of having to read and re-read the same bland and formulaic books for years" that prompted *Spare Bear*, the story of a "spare" teddy bear, bought for a child, that lies languishing in a cupboard, and then has to cope with feelings of both happiness and guilt when his bear rival is incapacitated, bringing him into the fold.

ML Greenall and Nadya Smith, a runners up in the competition, each won £500. Ms Greenall, 67, has painted and drawn all her life. Her *Harry*

the Street Pigeon tells the story of a pigeon who decides to stand up to a shop owner.

Nadya Smith's *Joe and the Lion* tells the story of Joe, bullied for being black and wearing glasses, who undergoes a transformation upon seeing a brave lion at the zoo. As in her two collections of short stories, *Will You Come on Wednesday* and *Imran's Secret*, the 70-year-old former Birmingham teacher draws on her experience in mainly Asian schools to explore the particular growing pains that children of ethnic minorities suffer.

The Story of the Year Competition has been running for five years, and this year attracted more than 2,000 entries. The stories were narrowed down to a final 10, all of which have been printed in a *Story of the Year 5* anthology to be published by Scholastic Children's Books in the autumn. Pupils from 10 schools read the shortlisted stories, and, along with a panel of seven judges, helped choose the winner.

— Jojo Moyes

Dempster judged 'inept' over libel against baron

Nigel Dempster, the *Daily Mail*'s gossip columnist, was labelled "inept" by a High Court judge yesterday and fined £10,000 for contempt of court for repeating a libel against millionaire Steven Bentinck.

Mr Dempster's employer, Associated Newspapers, publisher of the *Daily Mail*, was also fined £25,000 and faces costs estimated at £20,000. The fines come on top of £50,000 paid into court for Bentinck in settlement of the original 1995 libel.

Judge Richard Walker ruled that Mr Dempster (right) and the newspaper were in contempt of court for breaching an undertaking made in 1995 not to repeat the claim that Baron Bentinck had been mean to his estranged wife.

The newspaper argued that no



breach had occurred because the words complained of in the second item did not amount to an allegation of meanness. But the judge ruled yesterday that the sec-

ond article did allege meanness on the part of Baron Bentinck, although on a "lesser scale" than in the first, and that its publication was a breach of the undertaking.

Judge Walker said he was not

satisfied that Mr Dempster had wilfully and deliberately broken the undertaking and concluded that his conduct in publishing the item may have been attributable to "ineptitude and negligence". Otherwise, he said, the sentence would have been stiffer.

Mr Dempster left the court without comment but Baron Bentinck said "My only regret is that there was not a token sojourn at Her Majesty's pleasure which might have had a more calming effect on future publications."

— Paul McCann

Controversial drugs tsar appointed

A controversial chief constable will be appointed today as the national drugs "tsar".

Keith Hellawell, Chief Constable of West Yorkshire, will become the UK Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator while his deputy will be Michael Trace, the head of the Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust (Rapt).

The Government has opted for two men with very different backgrounds to help straddle the different sides of the drugs debate and to share the workload.

Mr Hellawell is in favour of legalising brothels.

Mr Hellawell earns significantly more than the £73,000 offered for the job, and it is unclear whether he has had to take a pay cut. It also remains to be seen whether Mr Hellawell will stick to the Government's tough line on drugs.

As a foil to the police chief, Mr Trace, 36, is seen as a younger and more user-friendly appointment with expertise in prisons and drug treatment.

— Jason Bennett

UPDATE

POLITICS

New MPs' radical image fades

Their arrival was meant to herald the start of a fresh, modernising era in the House of Commons. But a survey has revealed that the 1997 intake of new MPs shows no more inclination to radically change the place than their predecessors did.

The *Parliamentary House Magazine* reports that while almost half the MPs elected for the first time in May would like to change the Palace of Westminster, as many want better offices as much as a new kind of politics. The magazine wrote to the 253 new members and received replies from 192. Some complained about the "museum-like" atmosphere, but just as many said they liked the sense of history about the place. Only three thought the debates too adversarial, but 27 said there was too much paperwork. One said what he really wanted was "an office with a window please".

The authors, Professor Philip Norton, from the University of Hull, and Austin Mitchell, long-standing Labour MP for Great Grimsby, said that the new MPs did not seem to be hankering after major changes.



LIFESTYLE

Gypsies lose out in health stakes

Gypsies and travellers are among the least healthy people in Britain and have little access to NHS services, new research claims today.

Their record of life expectancy, infant mortality, accidents and chronic diseases was significantly worse than that of house-dwellers, according to Dr Derek Daves, a lecturer in housing policy at the University of Bristol, who argues in a new book that the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act has worsened the already comparatively poor health of travelling people. Gypsies and travellers were unable to register with GPs, leading to an increased incidence of chronic diseases among children and adults, as well as poor ante-natal care and little health education. Dental health was at the level of "almost criminal neglect", Dr Daves said.

• "Gypsies, travellers and the health service: A study in inequality", is available from The Policy Press, University of Bristol.

SOCIETY

Invest in children, says Barnardo's

Failing to invest in children costs Britain a fortune, according to a report released today.

Poverty, family breakdown, crime and violence later in life could be reduced if the Government supported children while they were young, said the children's charity Barnardo's. Its report, *Today and Tomorrow: Investing in our Children*, highlights an American programme called High/Scope which has shown how early education for disadvantaged children can have a major impact on their futures; children following the programme are more likely to go on to higher education, find jobs, and enjoy higher earnings than those who do not. The scheme also resulted in lower rates of crime, benefit claims and teenage pregnancy, the report stated. "Investing in the early years works," Roger Singleton, Barnardo's chief executive, said.

• "Today and Tomorrow: Investing in our Children", Barnardo's Childcare Publications, Barnardo's Trading Estate, Paycocke Road, Basildon, SS14 3DR. £7.50

— Glenda Cooper

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.12	Italy (lira)	2,722
Austria (schillings)	19.42	Japan (yen)	193.57
Belgium (francs)	57.10	Malta (lira)	0.61
Canada (\$)	2.18	Netherlands (gulders)	3.11
Cyprus (pounds)	0.81	Norway (kroner)	11.14
Denmark (kroner)	10.59	Portugal (escudos)	279.21
France (francs)	9.28	Spain (pesetas)	227.77
Germany (marks)	2.77	Sweden (kroner)	12.02
Greece (drachmai)	439.03	Switzerland (francs)	1.31
Hong Kong (\$)	12.16	Turkey (lira)	272,559
Ireland (pounds)	1.07	USA (\$)	1.58

Source: Thomas Cook

Rates for indication purposes only

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Genes offer Alzheimer's breakthrough

A combination of two genes carried by one in 15 of the population is associated with a 30-fold increase in the risk of contracting Alzheimer's disease. Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor, considers the implications.

An advance in the understanding of one of the most feared diseases in the western world is reported by scientists today. Researchers at Oxford University have discovered a gene which interacts with a second, previously known gene to increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

People who carry both genes have 30 times the normal risk of developing the degenerative condition which strips the elderly of their dignity and affects an estimated 600,000 people in Britain. But the discovery raises questions about the ethics of testing for a disease that cannot be cured or prevented.

The Oxford discovery builds on earlier American research in 1993 which identified a variant of the Apo E gene on chromosome 19. People with the variant, known as E4 - about 25 per cent of the population - have a four-fold increased risk of developing Alzheimer's.

Now scientists at the Oxford project to investigate memory and ageing (Optima), headed by Professor David Smith, have discovered a variant of the gene for butyrylcholinesterase, a protein, on chromosome 3, which interacts with Apo E4 to give a 30-fold increase in risk. When present alone, the variant of the gene, known as "K", increases the risk seven and a half times.

Only those over 65 with late onset Alzheimer's are affected. Professor Smith said: "Is there an interaction [between the two gene variants], there too? If not then the effect is very specific to Alzheimer's, which would be a very important clue. If it does then it could be important in screening for heart disease."



Breakfast rivals: Chris Evans and Zoe Ball are battling for ratings - and headlines. Photographs: Andrew Buurman and PA

Hype is winner in the battle for breakfast time

The battle of breakfast time radio between Zoe Ball and Chris Evans got under way yesterday. Paul McCormick, Media Correspondent, finds that the struggle of the airwaves came second to the battle for headlines.

To bastardise Disraeli: there are three types of hype - hype, damned hype and show business type. When Chris Evans started his breakfast show on Virgin Radio yesterday and Zoe Ball and the established DJ Kevin Greening started their new show on Radio 1 it was difficult to separate the damned lies from the publicity stunts.

Round one in the publicity battle went to the BBC with a report that its radio chief Matthew Bannister had turned down a request from Chris Evans' agent two weeks ago for Evans to return to Radio 1.

Evans then made his own bid for headlines by claiming he had told Bannister to sack him so that Bannister could appear in control: "I had a breakfast meeting with Matthew Bannister. Matthew said he was having trouble fending off the press and pressure from the governors."

"I said, 'Between you and I, the best thing you could do now is get rid of me, because I have delivered the audience, then you can show your authority by getting rid of me'."

Evans tried to pump controversy into his show by inviting William Hague, the Tory leader, on to the show to admit he is "a raving homosexual and proud of it" - while admitting that he has Hague isn't gay, but saying it would be wonderful for ratings.

Evans also complained about having to work for three hours a day and celebrated the

new sponsor for his show by drinking a can of beer at 8.08am: "If you can't get pissed on your own show, when can you get pissed?" he asked.

In a show that saw the increasingly self-referential Evans play only five songs in his first hour, the DJ also revealed that he had returned to radio to get more freebies: "The reason we came back to the radio is because we stopped getting things for free. We didn't realise how much we got for free since we came off." He and his team had had free car loans and scooters in their time at Radio 1 and he had a Bentley at the weekend.

Radio 1 was making its own bid to keep listeners - and make headlines - by interviewing two of the Spice Girls about how the England footballer David Beckham had flown to Turkey to be with his girlfriend, Victoria Adams, a member of the all-girl band. Such is the fare of the breakfast show.

Radio 1 did at least attempt to stick to music and had the Lightning Seeds' lead singer, Ian Broudie, in the studio to play the band's new single.

At a post-show press conference just after Chris Evans and Richard Branson had sprayed each other with champagne Evans asserted, without a trace of irony, that Zoe Ball had been hired by the BBC just to garner publicity. "It's not Zoe's show," he said. "It's Kevin's. They are using her as a massive publicity thing."

The reason for all the fuss is that almost half of all radio listening takes place between 7 and 9am each day when 34 million people tune in to a radio. Over 5 million people listen to Radio 1 while Virgin is heard by 1.8 million.

Mr Bannister said: "You have to get your breakfast show right because the millions you bring in then will likely stay with you for the rest of the day."

FULL ON.

TV has gone too far, says Middle England's high priestess of passion

Mary Wesley went to the Cheltenham Festival of Literature and captivated her audience with a lecture on sex. Sam Taylor listened to the 84-year-old novelist who could teach Doctor Ruth a thing or two.

Sex has come to Cheltenham. In a room packed with loyal fans, fed a diet of unbridled passion, heaving bosoms, handsome heroes and sexually bereft heroines, this was the moment they had been waiting for. They smiled when she mentioned her socialism, they cooed when she spoke lovingly of her home in Cornwall, they cheered the good news of her successful hip replacement but mostly they wriggled in their seats, waiting.

And they weren't disappointed. Mary Wesley does sex for middle England like no other. "Sex," said Mary, "is everywhere you look, in the street, in paintings, in music, in gestures, in just about everything." And, of course, in her novels. This, after all, is the woman that brought us the *Camomile Lawn*, a book that, when it was subsequently adapted for the small screen by Sir Peter Hall, kept the nation goggle-eyed week after week, enraptured by the extremely



Wesley: "We had sex but we didn't take our clothes off"

high bare-breast count. The whole nation is, except for the author herself. "I hated the way they adapted the *Camomile Lawn* for the television", she fumed. "All those long languorous sex scenes were so out of context because we didn't have central heating during the war and so, although we certainly had lots of sex, we certainly didn't take all our clothes off. It was far too cold for all that. We went to bed in several sturdy sweaters and only took some of them off when we were actually under the lights off."

It wasn't she explained that she was a prude, far from it, just that it made her extremely angry that the BBC had seen fit

to abandon completely the period of the book. "Unforgivable", she added. "Here, here," said the elderly Cheltenham gentleman seated at the back of the hall. "I never got a good look at my wife's body for years and even then we had to have the lights off."

Mary, who didn't write her first novel, *Jumping The Queue*, until she was 70, gained her own sexual education in a time when young women were kept ignorant and innocent and the majority of her peers didn't have a clue what to expect. "I remember during the war, a young girl of 24 years old who was engaged to be married came up to me and asked if I could explain to her what would

FASHION
Stella McCartney, a virgin in Paris.
A Beatle's daughter joins the big league with her first catwalk show. Does it make sense?

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Blair barracked after historic handshake with Adams

Tony Blair was jostled and jeered by loyalists after shaking hands with Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams during a visit to Belfast. It was, says David McKittrick, Ireland Correspondent, a day which combined the promise of new beginnings with a sharp reminder of the persistence of conflict.

Tony Blair encountered both the rough and the smooth in Belfast yesterday. The smooth part came with what was by all accounts a cordial meeting with Gerry Adams. Martin McGuinness and other republicans in the inter-party talks at Stormont.

When Mr Adams told him that he hoped he would be "the last British prime minister with jurisdiction in Ireland," he did so in a non-confrontational tone. When Mr Blair replied that "there is an opportunity and we've got to seize it because if we don't see it we may not see it again in my lifetime," the Sinn Féin leader seems to have been impressed.

The civilities which accompanied this, the first hand-

shake between a prime minister and a Sinn Féin leader since Lloyd George met Michael Collins, were however in sharp contrast to the rough treatment Mr Blair received an hour later in an east Belfast shopping centre.

"Traitor," they shouted. "Your hands are covered in blood," they barracked him. The loyalist protesters were wailing, some wearing rubber gloves to show what they thought of the Blair-Adams handshake. "Shame," they shouted. One man kept up a metronomic chant: "Scum - scum - scum." A woman yelled: "You are contaminated, I'll not shake hands with you."

The Prime Minister took refuge in a bank before the security people got together to escort him away from it all.

David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, blamed the media, saying people had been "inflamed and goaded" by exaggerated reports of the significance of the occasion. He added: "I disapprove of what has happened but let's put the responsibility where it belongs."

The handshakes took place behind closed doors at the Stormont talks building.

Afterwards Mr Blair said: "I treated Gerry Adams and the members of Sinn Féin in the same way I treat any human be-

ing. What is important in the situation here in Northern Ireland is that we do treat each other as human beings. Everybody who is here has got to be committed to the principle of non-violence - anybody who departs from this will not be in these talks."

Mr Blair also held short meetings with the seven other parties, apart from Sinn Féin, who are in the talks. While discussions are still in their early stages, the British and Irish governments hope that today will bring the opening of substantive negotiations on what is seen as the most sensitive part of the talks, the question of Northern Ireland's future relations with the rest of Ireland.



Tony Blair is escorted through angry loyalist protesters at an east Belfast shopping centre shortly after meeting Gerry Adams. Photograph: Pacemaker



Michael Collins: Described PM as 'obnoxious'

Lloyd George had never been quite so excited

The last occasion when a British prime minister formally met leaders of Sinn Féin was in 1921. David McKittrick on the historical precedents for yesterday's handshake.

At their four one-to-one meetings in 1921, Eamon de Valera treated the British prime minister, Lloyd George, to extensive displays of his

legendary gifts for verbosity and ambiguity. His lengthy account of England's historic wrongs against Ireland left the prime minister, by one account, "white and exhausted".

Nonetheless, Lloyd George was quite taken by the republican leader, summing him up to a confidant as "a nice man, honest, astonishingly little vocabulary, wants to settle but afraid of his followers".

The PM had made special preparations for the meeting,

his secretary recording in her diary: "I have never seen him so excited as he was before de Valera arrived. I could see he was working out the best way of dealing with de Valera - as I told him afterwards, he was bringing up all his guns."

Since she was also Lloyd George's lover, it may be presumed that she was familiar with his states of excitement.

Lloyd George, in a move which could hardly be de-

scribed as subtle, had the cabinet room decked out with a huge map of the world emphasising the large areas which then belonged to the British empire. De Valera, however, refused to be impressed. In their talks Lloyd George could get few straight answers.

Their discussions ended without agreement but later in the year a full republican negotiating team arrived in London, this time dominated by Michael Collins.

The two men did not get on, Collins finding Lloyd George "particularly obnoxious". The PM originally judged the republican to be "undoubtedly a considerable person", but he later dismissed him as "an uneducated, rather stupid man".

A problem arose when some British ministers did not wish to shake hands with the Sinn Féin delegation, regarding them as murderers. To deal with this Lloyd George alone shook hands with the republicans. He then introduced them to his ministers across the cabinet table, the broad expanse of which made handshakes impossible.

Lloyd George never managed to establish working relationships with republicans, but the talks exercise was in republican terms disastrous, leading to the Anglo-Irish treaty, the split within republicanism, the death of Collins and the cementing of the partition of Ireland.



Lloyd George: Felt Collins was 'a rather stupid man'

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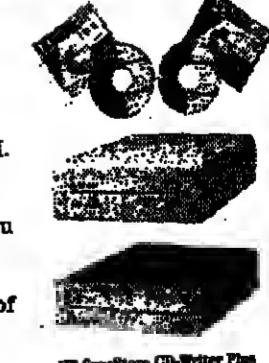
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Banks promises action as Rome forces football violence back on the agenda

After Rome, the FA fears of further violence at the World Cup. While Tony Banks promised a clampdown on hooligans and "unofficial" ticket agents, Ian Burrell says fans are already planning their trips to France.

Despite evidence that many English fans were the innocent victims of thuggish Italian policing at Saturday's match in Rome, the violence has forced football hooliganism back on to the political agenda.

Tony Banks, the sports minister, said yesterday that the courts were not doing enough to stop convicted thugs travel-

ling abroad. "Officials ... are now reviewing the scheme. Because quite clearly, if we are not using the powers that we have to stop these people travelling then frankly we are not doing our job properly," he said.

Earlier Mr Banks said that, although he blamed Italian fans for starting the violence, he was concerned at the role of

what he called "so-called responsible" ticket agencies which sold English fans tickets obtained from Italian sources. "We are going to have look very carefully at whether this should be permitted," he said.

Keith Prowse International, which sold packages for the game to 950 England fans, said it supplied British and Italian

police with the names and addresses of all the supporters. "We have done nothing wrong. In fact, the Italian authorities even told us how well we had done everything," it said.

France is the next potential battle zone and yesterday travel companies reported an immediate demand for packages to the finals in the summer.

Richard Brierty, chief executive of the Association of British Tour Operators to France, said: "I would have thought all operators interested in offering the package will look at any [ticketing] source they can provide it is legal and above board." Yesterday the Italian judicial authorities were dealing with 31 English fans ar-

rested at the weekend. Andrew Jordan, 38, a manager, from St Albans, Hertfordshire; Fernando Puerolano, 31, a psychiatric nurse from Brentwood, Essex; and Nigel Andrews, 39, from Cradley Heath, West Midlands admitted knocking a policeman unconscious and received eight-month suspended jail sentences. The same

sentence was imposed on Patrick Brogan, 30, of Aldershot, Hampshire, who admitted headbutting a policeman. In Ireland yesterday, Stephen Smith, 31, from Scunthorpe, was banned from the country after admitting throwing seats at Irish fans when England played in Dublin in 1993.

Italy draw Russia, page 32

Surgeons accused over high child death rate

A senior consultant is alleged to have continued to perform complex heart surgery on babies although the death rate for his patients was nearly four times the national average. Kathy Marks reports on one of the most significant General Medical Council cases of recent years.

Between 1990 and 1994, nine of the fifteen babies who underwent "hole in the heart" operations at the hands of James Wisbeart died. The mortality rate, according to Roger Henderson, QC, counsel for the GMC, was "unacceptably high."

The charge was made at the start of a marathon disciplinary hearing against three doctors accused of serious professional misconduct relating to babies operated on four congenital heart defects at the Bristol Royal Infirmary between 1988 and 1995.

The case against Mr Wisbeart and Jarnadan Dhasmana, both paediatric cardiac surgeons, and Dr John Roylance, former chief executive of the United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust, is expected to last well into next year and to hear evidence from up to 40 families. It will be followed by a Government inquiry that could lead to changes in the way that surgical practice is regulated.

Mr Henderson said that Mr Wisbeart should have realised by 1993 that his death rate was up to 54 per cent, compared with a national level of 13.9 per cent. His rate was "comparatively disastrous," Mr Henderson said.

Mr Wisbeart and Mr Dhasmana, the latter of whom specialised in "switching" operations to unscramble major arteries, are alleged to have continued with their

work despite concerns expressed to them by colleagues. Mr Wisbeart, who was also the hospital's medical director and is now retired, is also said to have misled parents about the risks of their children dying or suffering brain damage. Dr Roylance is accused of failing to heed the concerns of other consultants and prevent further operations going ahead.

Mr Henderson said lessons had been learned in Bristol and the provision of paediatric heart services had radically improved in the past two years. "I appreciate that these words may be of little solace to parents of children who have died or suffered brain damage," he added. "It is clear that emotions run high in many quarters."

Of Mr Dhasmana's infant patients, 20 out of 38 died between 1988 and 1995. Mr Henderson said that no one doubted the dedication of either doctor, but they should have been aware of how poorly their results compared with the national picture. "They had to stop operating if too many babies were dying," he said.

Mr Henderson said that Dr Stephen Balsam, a consultant anaesthetist, had played a key role in raising the alert about the two surgeons. "He may be portrayed by others as an rather unattractive whistle-blower," he said. "The fact remains that was and is the overriding duty of a doctor to safeguard the interests of patients, even if that means snapping a colleague or blowing the whistle on a colleague's performance or conduct."

Mr Henderson said experts would tell the GMC that a number of children "would be alive today" if a more experienced surgeon had operated on Mr Dhasmana's patients. At one time, two babies out of three were dying after being operated on by him, more than six times the accepted level.

All three doctors deny misconduct. The case continues tomorrow.

John Denver dies in crash

Often scorned by the critics, doted on by fans who bought his records by the million, country singer John Denver died when the small aircraft he was flying plummeted into the Pacific. Denver, a licensed pilot, crashed shortly after take-off from Monterey Airport, south of San Francisco, on Sunday night. His single-engine aircraft was described by local police as "experimental", and witnesses said it dropped suddenly into the water from about 500 feet.

Denver, 53, became one of the biggest recording artists in the United States with a country boy image and songs that were irresistibly catchy. His allure was difficult to define but it served him well. "He was never anything but John Denver. He didn't accommodate new trends," said his friend Pierre Cossette.

Born Henry John Deutscher Jr, son of an Air Force pilot, he took his name from

the capital of Colorado, the state where he lived. His big break came in 1969 when one of his songs, "Leaving on a Jet Plane", was turned into a hit by Peter, Paul and Mary. He began performing his own compositions, like, "Sunshine on my Shoulders", and "Thank God I'm a Country Boy". Eight of his albums went platinum with sales of more than a million and John Denver's Greatest Hit has sold 10 million world-wide.

He is best known for "Annie's Song", written for his first wife. Its lyrics were typical of his folk-pop tunes and their simple, Western themes: "You fill up my senses, like a night in the forest, like the mountains in spring time, like a walk in the rain." He was never anything but John Denver. He didn't accommodate new trends," said his friend Pierre Cossette.

— Tim Cornwell
Obituary, page 22

13 MUSICIANS WHO DIED IN PLANE CRASHES

Glenn Miller – 1944
Buddy Holly
The Big Bopper
Ritchie Valens – all together in 1959
Patsy Cline – 1963
Jim Reeves – 1964
Otis Redding – 1967
Ronnie van Zant

Steve Gaines
Cassie Gaines (all Lynyrd Skynyrd) – 1977
Rick Nelson – 1985
Stevie Ray Vaughan – 1990 (plus three members of Eric Clapton's entourage in a helicopter crash)
John Denver – 1997



History man: Michael Foot after speaking at the dedication of newly restored memorials to radical reformers and to Robert Owen, founder of the Co-operative Movement, in Kensal Green, north-west London. Photograph: David Rose

High winds ground Saturn mission as court bid fails

Court battles launched by environmentalists failed to stop the Cassini-Huygens mission to Saturn from getting off the launch pad yesterday. Instead, it was nature that held up the start of its 2.2 billion-mile journey.

High winds at 45,000ft meant the 182ft-high rocket was grounded by scientists at mission control in Florida but it still has a launch window extending to 15 November in order to complete its rendezvous with Titan, one of Saturn's moons, in seven years.

The legal challenges came from environmentalists concerned about radiation contamination should the rocket, which has a nuclear power source, crash, spilling plutonium into the atmosphere. They failed, and scientists continued to try to reassure them yesterday that the odds of any leakage were 1,400-1 against.

Technical hitches involving batteries and a computer contributed to yesterday's delay. However, the winds were above acceptable levels, according to mission control. The next suitable launch opportunity is tomorrow morning.

— Steve Boggan

£15m for Maxwell legal aid

The legal aid bill for defence lawyers in the Maxwell fraud trial totalled £14.15m, it was revealed yesterday. Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, gave the figures as he defended government plans to cap the legal aid fees paid in big criminal trials.

Lord Irvine, giving evidence to the Commons Home Affairs Select Committee, said that just 1 per cent of cases accounted for 40 per cent of the criminal legal aid paid out in the Crown Courts.

"These are very big figures indeed. The very, very high fees that in some cases are charged – I think there is a very powerful argument that we move in certain categories to fixed price contracting." However, he acknowledged the Government could not force any lawyer to work for fees they considered unacceptable.

First woman for national park

One of the last bastions of male dominance in the public service is beginning to crumble. The heavily bearded world of national parks is about to get its first woman chief executive.

Heather Hancock, a 32-year-old who helped set up the Department of National Heritage and the Millennium Commission, has been appointed national park officer for the Yorkshire Dales. She beat 160 other applicants to head the park authority.

— Stephen Goodwin

Soldier escapes Cyprus jail

A British soldier escaped a jail sentence yesterday when he was fined £750 for assaulting two tourists outside a Cyprus disco.

King's Riflesman Roger Bell, 26, from Liverpool, walked from court a free man after the judge decided not to impose a custodial sentence in order to save the soldier's army career.

Any type of custodial sentence or even a suspended one would have meant Bell, a storekeeper with the regiment in Cyprus, would have been discharged. Bell faced up to three years in a Cyprus prison after pleading guilty to causing actual bodily harm to English tourists Barry Ford, 23, and a charge of common assault against his girlfriend Claire Harbour, 22, on in August.

Teacher agency drops demand for top degrees

A target requiring the majority of trainee teachers to hold a top degree has been scrapped. The move emerged as a recruitment drive is launched to remedy a growing shortfall in the profession, says Education Correspondent Lucy Ward.

same qualifications as entrants to other degree programmes. I don't see why that should stand for anything less than that – a weak teacher does more harm than an absent teacher."

The launch will see the unveiling of a £1.5m advertising campaign to boost recruitment, featuring cinema adverts spreading the message: "No one forgets a good teacher."

Applications for courses have dropped sharply as the economic recovery has increased the career options for graduates.

At the end of August, there were 1,433 graduates applying in each maths in secondary schools, compared with 2,246 in 1994. For science, there were fewer than 3,000 applications compared with 4,000 in 1994.

Amid the efforts to attract high quality new recruits to teaching, local authorities are also seeking government help in removing those not up to standard.

A £17m cash pot being considered by ministers will allow schools to pay off bad teachers to remove them from the classroom as early as possible. This follows an approach by Graham Lane, education chairman of the Local Government Association and leader of the local authority employers.

Mr Lane said a fund was needed to allow schools to implement a new agreement to fast-track procedures for removing incompetent teachers without a loss of momentum. No dismissal should take longer than two terms in total, the agreement says.

Teachers' red tape rage

Teachers believe they are wasting nearly three hours a day on paperwork and on-teaching activities, says a survey released yesterday.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, which carried out the survey, said that the Government's policy of target-setting was one of the new initiatives which threatened to submerge teachers in paperwork.

Target-setting is central to the Government's efforts to raise standards. Each school will set goals which will contribute to national targets on which the Government will be judged in five years' time.

But Mr de Gruchy said that target setting was becoming absurd. In one unnamed school teachers had to write reports on children every two weeks in all subjects. They then have to describe what each child is going to achieve in another two weeks, and then describe how they are going to move

each child from where they are to where they want them to be."

The union's survey of nearly 12,000 teachers shows that they think around 15 hours of their 51-hour week are wasted on jobs that take them out of the classroom.

Teachers were asked to place a value on each of seven areas of work. Only teaching, lesson preparation and marking scored highly. They thought contact with governors was largely a waste of time and that communication with parents, except when a child had misbehaved, was often unproductive. Marketing, teachers said, was the biggest waste of time.

They suggested that the Office for Standards in Education, which supervises inspections, was one of the main reasons for administrative overload.

Using leaders accept that teachers must continue to carry out some of the tasks which they do not value highly but believe red tape could still be cut.

— Judith Judd

New powers urged to oust rogue police

Police chiefs last night called for sweeping powers to root out corrupt officers. The Association of Chief Police Officers said measures were needed to get rid of the "tiny minority" of police who had no place in the service.

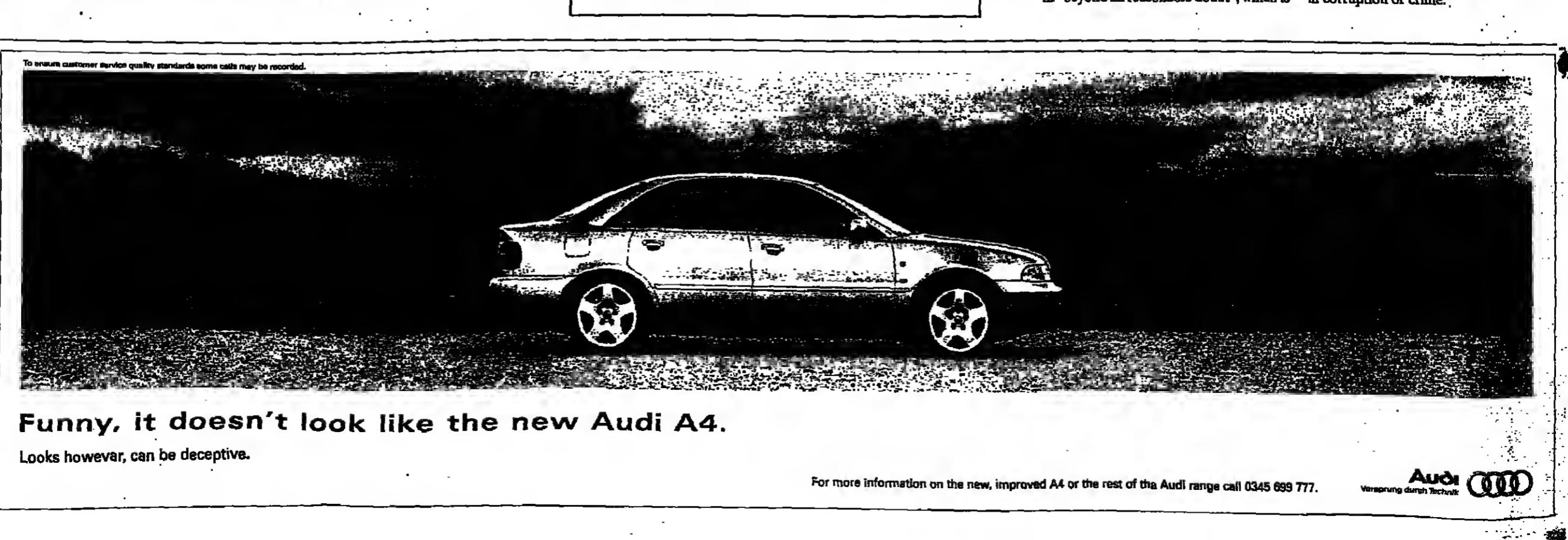
In evidence presented to the Commons Home Affairs Select Committee Britain's top-ranking police chiefs called for a lower standard of proof in disciplinary proceedings. Acpo said the test should be that the case is proved "on the balance of probabilities" rather than the present standard of "beyond all reasonable doubt", which is

the same as for a criminal prosecution. The chairman of Acpo's discipline and complaints sub-committee, Peter Bensley, the Chief Constable of Lincolnshire, told MPs that the current situation was out of step with modern management practice.

"I have less powers than the manager of a large business," he said. "You are expecting me to manage an organisation. Just give us the tools to do the job."

He stressed that the new powers were needed to deal with the most serious cases where officers were alleged to be involved in corruption or crime.

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The Swiss banks are achieving significant progress towards resolving the issue of dormant World War II-era accounts in a fair and open manner.

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■ Identifying Dormant Accounts

The Swiss banks are committed to identifying all accounts that could have belonged to victims of Nazi persecution.

In addition to conducting their own search for dormant accounts, the Swiss banks are providing complete access and assistance to hundreds of forensic auditors working for the Independent Committee of Eminent Persons, chaired by Paul A. Volcker and comprised of prominent Jewish and Swiss leaders.

■ Helping Needy Holocaust Survivors

The Swiss banks are committed to helping needy Holocaust survivors.

Earlier this year, the three largest Swiss banks, Credit Suisse, Swiss Bank Corporation and UBS, contributed 100 million Swiss francs (\$70 million) to establish a special fund for victims of the Holocaust. Other Swiss banks and Swiss industry have since contributed an additional 80 million Swiss francs (\$55 million). With a pledge of 100 million Swiss francs from the Swiss National Bank the fund now has a total of 280 million Swiss francs (\$194 million). The Fund's board consists of representatives of Jewish organisations and private Swiss citizens and is chaired by Rolf Bloch, leader of the Swiss Jewish community. Proceeds from the Fund will soon be distributed to Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe.

■ Publishing Dormant Accounts

The Swiss banks are committed to publishing dormant accounts.

In July, the Swiss banks published an initial list of World War II-era dormant accounts of non-Swiss customers in newspapers around the world and established an Internet site. The Swiss banks also established five international contact offices staffed by representatives of the accounting organisation of Ernst & Young which was engaged to help rightful owners file claims.

■ Creating An Expedited Payment Process

The Swiss banks are committed to returning assets to their rightful owners quickly, easily and without cost to claimants.

To accomplish this objective, the banks have established a cost-free, expedited payment process, which is being supervised by an independent, international panel operating under relaxed standards of proof. Claims from the July list are now being processed and payments will be made shortly.

This progress demonstrates the seriousness of the Swiss banks which are among the first to address and to resolve this complex issue.

New Information Available

On October 29, the following World War II-era accounts will be published:

- Dormant passbooks and savings accounts of *non-Swiss* citizens.
- Dormant accounts of *non-Swiss* citizens that have been identified as a result of the Swiss banks' ongoing search.
- Dormant accounts belonging to *Swiss* citizens.

Call Our Contact Offices

If you wish to review these lists, please fill out the Information Kit Request Form and mail it to the nearest Ernst & Young contact office listed below. You will receive an Information Kit that includes the lists, fully describes the claims process, and explains how to file a claim.

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2 Kremenski Street, Tel Aviv, Israel 67899,
Tel. +972 3 623 2559
- ATAG Ernst & Young, Dormant Accounts
Aeschengraben 9, P.O. Box 2149, CH-4002 Basel,
Switzerland, Tel. +41 61 272 08 11
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If you have any questions or need assistance, please call the following Freephone number:
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Wanted: computer experts. Name your salary

A computer services group is resorting to innovative tactics in response to the chronic shortage of computer specialists in the UK. Sameena Ahmad discovers that the demand for experts means some salaries have doubled in the past two years.

Logica has just opened its first walk-in careers desk in London, inviting people who read its advertisements on London's underground trains to come in off the street, learn about the company and set up an interview.

A spokesman for the company said the office near Oxford Circus had been open just five days, but has already attracted 100 people, 60 of whom have been invited for formal interview.

The spokesman said the company has been staggered by the success of the venture: "It's about being smart. Of course we advertise in papers like everyone else, but we thought how could we stand out from other IT companies looking for staff?" he said.

"This has proved incredibly popular. We had in a highly qualified programmer from the Middle East in the office, who happened to spot the advertisement on his way into London from Heathrow. He is being interviewed next week."

Logica said the advertisements were targeted at graduates and people looking to learn about IT as well as IT professionals. Given the initial success, the group may open more desks outside London.

The company is also offering existing staff bonuses to introduce new employees. Last year the company recruited a quarter of its new people in the



Logging on: Hopeful job candidates at Logica's drop-in interview centre just off Oxford Street in central London

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Netherlands this way.

Shortage of skilled IT staff has become the key factor limiting the growth of IT companies in the UK. Logica was forced to post a profits warning in June after it said it had failed to recruit computer staff quickly enough.

The problem is soaring salaries, driven by the growing reliance of business on IT and exploding demand for IT specialists to solve the millennium crisis and the possible introduction of the single currency.

The combination of wage inflation, averaging a staggering 20 per cent a year, plus

growth in the number of short term contracts has led to a sharp increase in staff turnover in the IT industry with computer buffs chasing the best paying contracts.

Richard Holway, who writes the IT bible, the Holway Report, said that computer staff shortages were becoming critical.

"I have heard of companies who have staff turnover rates of up to 30 per cent. It is just appalling given the costs of recruiting new staff. Demand for IT - bank loyalty cards, the Internet, electronic trading - is phenomenal and growing."

It is not just information technology experts who see their salaries rocket over the last few years.

A shortage of staff in the financial world means employers are having to pay out over the odds to secure the best people.

With tax departments struggling to find recruits, salaries have increased by 10 per cent in the last three months alone.

A head of tax working for a FTSE 100 company can earn £160,000 today compared with £144,000 in July.

Banks are also paying out more than they were a few months ago. A head of derivatives operations in a major bank can earn £105,000 compared with £98,000 three months ago.

But the most dramatic increase in demand

has been for quantitative analysts who assess the financial risk of a company. Last year a PhD quantitative analyst with three years' experience could earn £70,000. This year their earning potential has shot up to £120,000.

In information technology, figures are comparable. A head of IT can now earn £150,000 compared with £125,000 a year ago.

A head of systems development can earn £80,000, compared with £60,000 two years ago. Programme managers can earn £80,000 compared with £40,000 two years ago. A project leader can £65,000 compared to £50,000 a year ago. A junior data base administrator can start on £30,000 compared with £24,000 a year ago.

(Figures: Robert Walters)

— Amanda Kelly

WHO PROFITS FROM SKILLS SHORTAGE

Fast-chip revolution for home computers

A new generation of ultra-fast micro chips was launched yesterday. They will have the processing power of a super-computer but at the cost of today's PCs. Randeep Ramesh says the new chips could revolutionise home computing

performed will be "significantly improved using the new chip". Mr Dewannain said that the computing power would especially be useful for many "Virtual Reality" applications.

"You could have classroom field trips to the Egyptian pyramids via virtual reality so real children experience the look and feel of an ancient civilisation," said Mr Dewannain.

Another area would be games - already a multi-billion pound global industry. The latest hits, such as Tomb Raider, feature animated figures in 3D but most suffer from being unlife-like.

"This chip will allow for a much more realistic representation. The problem is that at the moment you are far from your computer looking like the scene outside your window," he added.

Mr Dewannain also predicted that with the increased number-crunching power that voice recognition for personal computers would become a reality. "It is a question of separating the real signal from the noise and that needs a powerful computer."

The new chips should be available in the second half of next year. Users will be able to purchase "boards" which can be inserted into conventional systems - most of which use microprocessors like Intel's Pentium chip. The microprocessor is likely to cost between £30 and £60 when produced in bulk.

The technology is developed from processors used in today's mobile phones. Eric Dewannain, Texas' European manager for the Digital Signal Processors, said: "It is like putting a Formula One engine in your family saloon."

The company says that any application that requires a large number of calculations to be

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Restoration drama: Conservationists are worried that Covent Garden is becoming 'tatty' Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Cafe society's blot on the townscape

Twenty three years after Covent Garden's fruit and vegetable market moved out, the area has become a victim of its own success. Stephen Goodwin examines a classic case of conservation at odds with commerce.

Aussie bars, canopies of patio-umbrellas and racks of garish waistcoats à la Carnaby Street; it's all too frightful for the Covent Garden Area Trust. The place may have been a market for most of the past 300 years but the Trust believes over-commercialisation is destroying the character of Inigo Jones's piazza.

Some 40 million people a year visit the central London piazza, making it one of the most successful city restorations. But the image of upmarket boutiques is being tarnished by businesses trying to wring every last penny from their patch.

A damning 127-page study by the

Civic Design Partnership warned last week that urgent action is needed if the historic area is not to lose the character which has made it so popular.

Pavement cafes marred by trading space beneath a canopy of corporate umbrellas are among the worst offenders, according to the Trust. Unauthorised stalls, tables and chairs obstruct footways and infiltration by less chic high street names are not far behind.

"It's really starting to look like the lower end of Oxford Street," says Leanne Poley, the Trust's administrator. This disdainful verdict taken in the likes of Sheila's Bar - "Drink your way round the world" - racks of cut-price clothing, and a Pizza Hut next to a Lloyds Bank.

"It's all so tatty ... We get accused of being terribly snobbish, but I don't think it is that. Once you start having all the same old high street people what's the point in coming here? You might as well go to New Malden."

The study, commissioned by the Trust jointly with English Heritage, Westmin-

ster City Council and Guardian Properties, who manage the restored market building, calls recommends better design for pavement cafes, removing obtrusive umbrellas, restoring authentic shop fronts and paving, and banning vehicles. The work would cost £5m.

Way back in mid-Saxon times a thriving trade settlement existed in the area. The piazza reflecting Inigo Jones's love of the formal market squares of Italy, and St Paul's Church, date from the 17th century. Charles Fowler's neo-classical market building appeared in 1830 and was roofed over in 1872.

The battle of the umbrellas seems destined to run and run. Trevor Davies, director of the Market Cafe, which has 140 seats beneath umbrellas out in the open, says the weather makes large umbrellas a necessity. He accused the conservationists of not listening to the traders: "They want to ban everything in sight without consulting. I used to come here as a kid when the [fruit and veg] market was thriving ... And that's how it should be."

Britain to lose out over Brent Spar

Shell's Brent Spar oil storage tank is likely to be scrapped on shore in Norway. The oil giant is now close to deciding on the preferred alternative to dumping the Spar at sea. But Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, says British yards will be the losers.

Shell will finally tell the Government what it wants to do with the Spar within the next two or three months, more than two years after Greenpeace's campaign forced the company to abandon its plans to sink the skyscraper-sized structure in the north Atlantic.

Soon after that traumatic event - Shell changed its corporate mind only a couple of hours before the Spar was meant to be scuppered - it began an exhaustive procedure to find a more acceptable alternative. The 14,500-tonne tank had spent two decades storing crude oil in a North Sea field.

At the beginning of this year Shell short-listed six engineering consortia which had put in a variety of bids for bringing the floating structure to shore and re-using or re-cycling it. Each was given £250,000 to carry out detailed planning.

Now each scheme has been analysed for its technical and safety risks, environmental impacts and "societal effects" by the independent Norwegian foundation Det Norske Veritas, a world leader in assessing marine risks. Each has been ranked under these different headings. The likely cost of each option has also been

weighed up independently. The results show how expensive recycling is compared with deep-sea dumping, which had been approved by the Government. That would have cost just under £5m.

The cheapest of the consortia's schemes comes in at £11.4m whilst the most expensive would cost £48m. Under that proposal the Brent Spar, currently moored in a Norwegian fjord, would be towed across the North Sea to a yard at Nigg in north-east Scotland, for scrapping.

Heinz Rothermund, managing director of Shell UK exploration and production said: "We are now entering the home straight." The aim was "to find a solution that on balance is at least as good as, or better than, deep-sea disposal".

He gave no clue as to what Shell's final preference would be. But from an analysis of the rankings under safety, risk, environmental impact and cost, it appears that one short-listed scheme to cut up the Brent Spar to build an offshore reef, protecting the East Anglian coastline, has little chance.

The highly ranked options with relatively low costs all involve Norwegian locations. The final choice will probably be between a consortium formed by the Scottish energy company John Wood, based in Aberdeen, and the Norwegian GMC group, and another Norwegian consortium, Kvaerner Seaway Spar Alliance.

Wood-GMC proposes using the Spar cables, then cutting its cylindrical hull into rings to extend a quay in Norway. Kvaerner Seaway plan to cut it up, either for metal scrap or to be used as a fish farm. Whatever Shell chooses will have to be approved by the government.

Whale deal links ban and local culls

A global sanctuary for whales - to be supported by the British Government at the International Whaling Commission meeting in Monaco next week - has left environmentalists in turmoil because it would allow coastal whaling.

A steep rise in the number of whales being killed this year by Japan and Norway has led Britain to join an international effort to ban all high seas whaling in return for allowing coastal whaling for the first time in 11 years.

Conservationists, led by Greenpeace, are opposed in principle to coastal whaling. They want a ban on all whaling and an end to trade in whale products. "We support a global sanctuary but not coastal whaling. Whales are no respecters of territorial limits," said a Greenpeace spokesman.

The idea of a sanctuary was put forward by Ireland and amounts to a political trade off in an attempt to regain some of



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through the eyes
of experts who
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Violence and sex offences mar 5% fall in crime rate

The number of criminal offences in England and Wales has dropped again, officially figures will show today. But as Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent, writes, it is not all good news for the Government

rose significantly. The worst areas for violent crime in 1996 were London and the South.

Today's police figures are expected to show that the bulk of the 5 per cent drop to about 2.4 million – the equivalent of about 4.75 million a year – are due to reductions in property crimes, such as burglary.

The Conservative Party is bound to seize on the figures as evidence that their "prison works" anti-crime strategy is continuing to prove effective. Michael Howard, the former Home Secretary, was in charge during four of the six months covered this year. The number of crimes have now fallen for four consecutive years, although they have almost doubled since the Tories came into power in 1979.

Recorded crimes fell by about 5 per cent – 125,000 offences – in the first half of the year, it is expected to be announced today. Violent crimes, however, are believed to have risen again in England and Wales.

Offences involving violence rose by 11 per cent to 344,300 cases last year, the biggest increase for seven years. Sexual offences including rape also

The way in which crime statistics are collated are also about to be altered, which is bound to result in a steep increase in the total of recorded offences. Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, is expected to stress the nature of the changes today to avoid having Labour's next crime results being branded a failure.

The way the twice-yearly crime figures are published are being overhauled in an attempt to provide a more accurate total and cut the political controversy that surrounds them. The previous system was criticised for the way a string of offences committed by an offender could end up being counted as just one crime. The new system would be broadly based on the principle of "one crime per victim".



Army's black and Asian recruitment drive turns to Kitchener for a role model

The Army yesterday unveiled its plan to re-use type of the most radical and successful advertising campaigns of all time to overcome its reputation for racial discrimination.

The enduring image of Lord Kitchener, pointing from a poster with the legend "Your Country Needs You", has been commanded for an ethnic recruitment drive, which aims to increase by seven-fold the numbers of black and Asian soldiers.

In place of Kitchener, the face of Ghanaian-born Captain "Fiddies" Dalton, looks out at would-be new recruits. A separate poster, designed to attract more Asian troops, features Warrant Officer Ashok Kumar Chauhan.

Both soldiers are members of the Army's ethnic minorities recruitment team, which has been set up amid concerns that only 1.94 per cent of military personnel come from ethnic minorities compared to 5 per cent in the civil service.

The new equal opportunities directive was announced yesterday by General Sir Roger Wheeler, Chief of the General Staff. "There is still a perception in the ethnic communities that the Army is a racist organisation," he said.

"But we now have a long-term programme to improve representation of ethnic minorities and to make sure that everyone in my Army understands that discrimination of any sort is not acceptable."

The campaign, devised by Saatchi and Saatchi has the backing of the Commission for Racial Equality, whose senior commissioner, Bob Purkiss, said: "I saw a black captain, Paul Ince, leading his troops to victory in Italy. There are many more in our society like him. They just need the opportunity."

The Army has been attacked in the past for ingrained racist attitudes and behaviour, particularly in more elite units.

The Kitchener poster was first used to recruit 100,000 new troops after the disastrous British casualty rates suffered in the early months of the First World War.

Jon Burrell

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Trainees to get minimum pay

Ministers are insisting that the national minimum wage will apply to jobless youngsters taking part in the New Deal programme – albeit at a lower rate.

As the CBI and the TUC make their submissions to the newly-created Low Pay Commission, the Government has decided that young people will be paid the "normal rate for the job". That means jobless 18- to 24-year-olds on work placements will be paid a special statutory minimum pay limit for all trainees.

The news emerges when the overwhelming majority of submissions to the commission, which will advise the Government on the national minimum wage, call for a "training rate". Employers in particular are concerned that businesses are not discouraged from taking on trainees by being forced to pay the full rate which is expected to come into force at the end of next year or early 1999.

The Government, however, could be heading for a clash over the minimum wage with the CBI, which will today urge the commission to exempt anyone on the Welfare to Work scheme which includes participants in the New Deal.

The CBI will say that a general minimum set in line with the now defunct Wages Council rates – equal to around £3.20 an hour – would be unlikely to cause significant job losses. However, it says a rate of £4.40 – favoured by some unions – would have a "serious impact on jobs and inflation".

A submission from the TUC, revealed last month in *The Independent*, calls for "something above £4 an hour".

– Barry Clement, Labour Editor

Hirst protesters fined

Five animal activists stormed into a top London restaurant to protest at an exhibition by controversial artist Damien Hirst, a court was told yesterday.

Customers at Quo Vadis, in Covent Garden, run by Marco Pierre-White, were sitting down to dinner by the exhibit – a couple of skinned bull's heads floating in formaldehyde – when "mayhem" broke out, it was claimed. A painting was kicked, a vase broken, and bollards full of rubbish emptied across the floor.

Neil Hanson, 30, of Hertfordshire; Robin Lane, 42, of south-east London, and Brendon McNally, 35, of north London, who admitted using threatening words and behaviour, were fined £200 over the incident last January. Melanie Gatty, 28, and Paul Gravette, 35, of north London, who denied causing affray, were bound over to keep the peace.

DAILY POEM

R.I.P. Off

by Edwin Brock

There was a job which went Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday, as though gold watches were hallmark St Peter with an eternal guarantee; there was a bed which went babies, toddlers schoolboys, teenagers and Goodbye; a woman whose waiting went lover, wife, sister, mother, furniture and saint; alcohol, hangovers, trains, tubes, buses and weeks of rain; but there was nothing which ever said This is all there is.

The Daily Poems for the rest of this week commemorate Edwin Brock, who died last month. Brock, who worked as a policeman, journalist and advertising copywriter, published nine collections of poetry, a novel and a memoir. Our choices all come from his *Five Ways to Kill a Man: new and selected poetry*, published by Emitharmon Press (£7.95).

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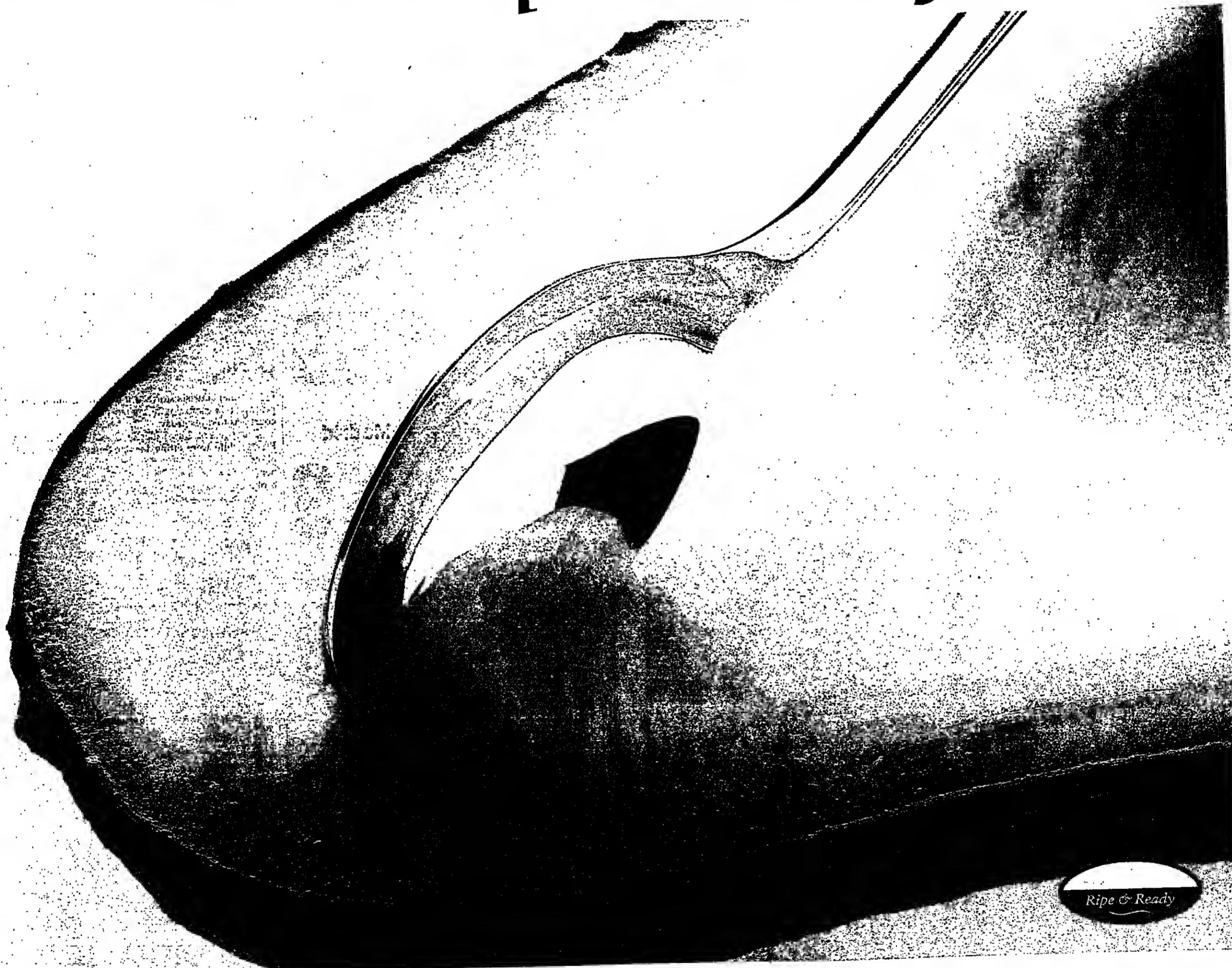


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Royal visit hits India's raw nerve

The Queen's plan today to visit to Amritsar, scene of the 1919 massacre of Indian nationalists, is embroiled in controversy. Demands for an apology are mounting, while Britain's stand on Kashmir is under attack. Peter Popham, in New Delhi, finds the royal visit is turning into a jamboree of grievances.

KR Narayanan, the journalist-turned-diplomat who is now President of India, came up with a resonant phrase. The exhibition of British Museum treasures entitled "The Enduring Image" which he and the Queen had just opened was, he said, "a refutation of the idea that civilisations clash. It is not civilisations that clash, but barbarisms."

So the war of words that has broken out between the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and the Indian Prime Minister IK Gujral over Kashmir is a clash of barbarisms. Mr Cook is accused of stirring it in informal chats with Pakistani journalists at a reception in Islamabad, urging Britain's involvement in negotiations over Kashmir's future – but he denies having said anything about Kashmir while in Pakistan.

Then yesterday at a private meeting in Cairo, Mr Gujral supposedly told Egyptian intellectuals that Britain was a "third-rate power", which "has no business to play any role in this issue in any form, since in any case it was responsible for the partition of the country."

Raj buffs will have noticed the cutting choice of the phrase "third-rate power", for it was Viceroy Lord Curzon who declared that if Britain were ever to lose India it would decline to a third-rate power. However,

Britain defies Libya at Lockerbie hearing

Britain faced Libya across the International Court of Justice yesterday and defended its hunt for the bombers of the New-York-bound Pan Am Flight 103, which crashed over Lockerbie nearly nine years ago, killing all 259 people on board and 11 on the ground. Britain and the United States will present a united front during the eight days of hearings. Both have filed counter-motions rejecting Libya's application and contend that the world court does not have jurisdiction over the case.

Mugabe defends land grab

President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe said his government would not compensate white farmers for land it planned to take to resettle thousands of peasants. "We are going to take the land and we are not going to pay a cent," Mr Mugabe was quoted as saying. In the past he has threatened to forcibly seize white-owned commercial farms without compensating the owners. The government has earmarked vast tracts of property under a controversial 1992 law which gives it power to forcibly take the land.

Algeria admits rebel strength

In an unprecedented admission, an Algerian general conceded that the Islamic insurgency has not been crushed. "Terrorism is in no way vanquished," several Algerian newspapers quoted the general in charge of an offensive in the Ouled Alieh district as saying. The unnamed general said that 33 insurgents and two leaders had been killed since the start of the operation 28 September. He said that four soldiers were killed and six others wounded.

Kurds erupt into civil war after peace talks collapse

The civil war between rival Kurdish factions in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan again erupted early yesterday, breaking a year-old ceasefire.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, backed by Iran, launched an offensive aimed at driving the rival Kurdistan Democratic Party from the strategic town of Shingal.

The war restarted after the failure of a Foreign Office conference between leaders of the two parties in London last week. An attack by Jalal Talabani, leader of the PUK, on the same positions last year led Massoud Barzani, leader of the KDP, to call in the Iraqi army. The KDP said in a statement that the PUK launched a "major offensive" against it, break-

ing the ceasefire brokered by the US, Britain and Turkey. The PUK confirmed the clashes, but said it was acting defensively.

Mr Talabani's attack has been joined by other enemies of Mr Barzani, such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Turkish Kurd guerrillas, whom he has been fighting in alliance with the Turkish army during its periodic invasions of Iraqi Kurdistan. His aim is to force Mr Barzani to evacuate his headquarters at Salabudin.

If he does, Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader, may intervene. If President Saddam were to engage in a prolonged intervention, President Bill Clinton would be under pressure to use US airpower.

— Patrick Cockburn



Activists from the Leftist Party of India clashing with police during protests in New Delhi yesterday against the Queen's visit to India. Today the Queen will lay a wreath at Jallianwala Bagh, scene of a massacre by British troops of Indian civilians. Photograph: AP

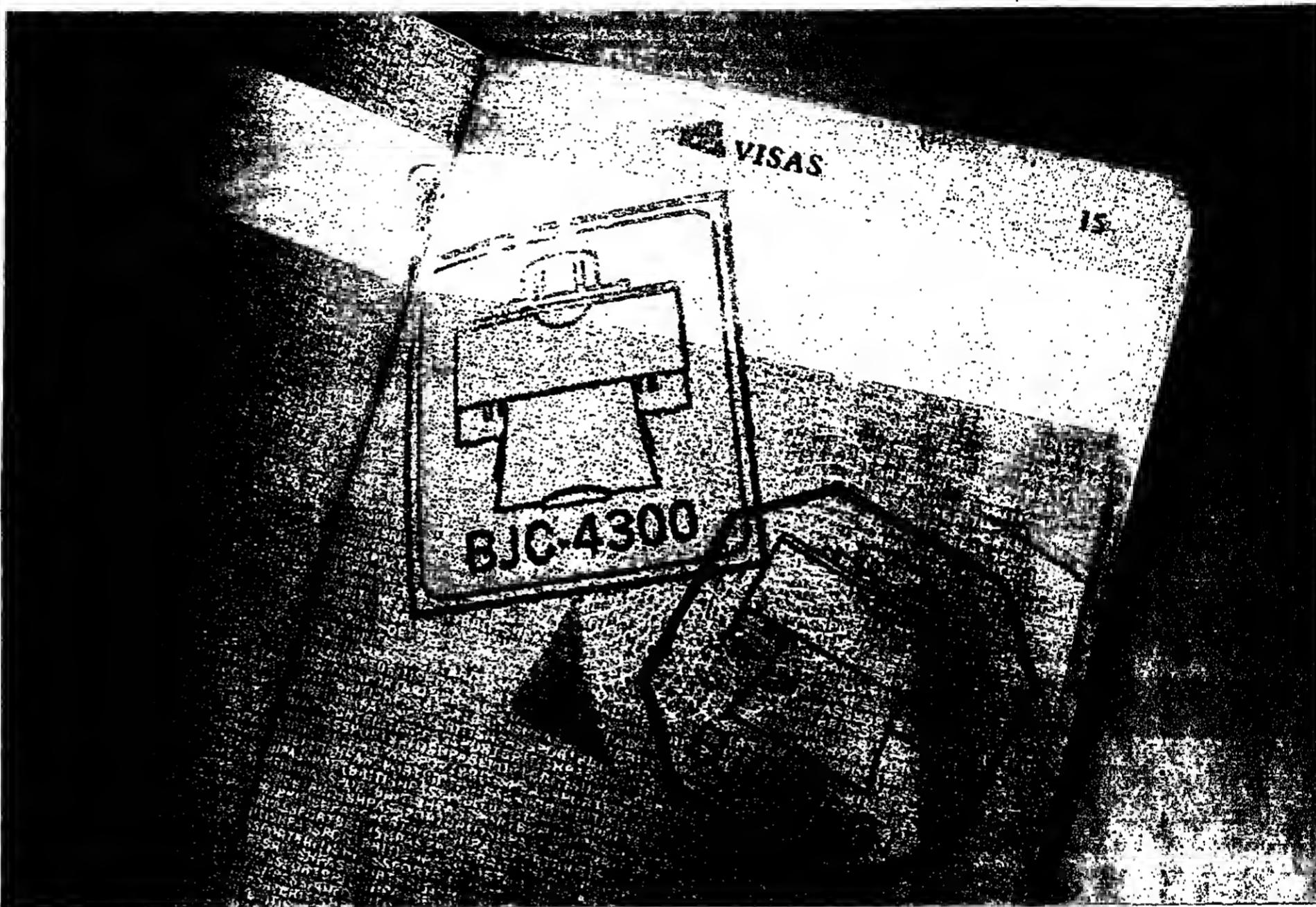
Korean leader's son fined £1m

A South Korean court yesterday sentenced President Kim Young-sam's second son to three years in jail and fined him 1.44 billion won (£1m) for bribery and tax evasion.

Kim, 38, was charged with taking kickbacks worth 3.22 billion won in return for favours, and evading taxes on the 3.39 billion won he took as gifts. He had said that the funds were donations to finance a future parliamentary campaign. Chief judge Sohn Ji-yeol said the judges believed Kim Hyun-chul had failed in his duties as the son of an incumbent president.

The President's son was head of an organisation that helped make Kim Young-sam the first civilian to be elected president in South Korea in more than four decades. His arrest and trial has damaged the credibility of his father, who has been reduced to a lame duck ahead of presidential elections on 18 December.

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Kohl's crowning moment fails to ignite party faithful

Europe's longest-serving leader was endorsed yesterday as the German Christian Democrats' candidate for a fifth term. However, Helmut Kohl's "coronation feast" was a tepid affair. At the CDU conference in Leipzig, Iain Karow hears a swelling chorus of demands for change.



Kohl: A standing ovation, but the knives are out

The records will show that Chancellor Kohl received a respectable two-minute standing ovation after his keynote speech. "I ask you, dear friends, to place your trust in me," he concluded, and, as if woken from a trance, 1,000 Christian Democrats rose slowly to their feet.

They put their hands together to make a noise, but there was just no rhythm to their clapping, no bravos, no hurrahs. Even to his followers, the prospect of a fifth term for Old King Kohl did not seem all that electrifying.

For 90 minutes, the Chan-

cellor tried to keep them awake. He spoke like a Christian Democrat of old; about morality, social justice, and the dangers represented by the "globalisation" of unbridled capitalism.

"We are not the party of the market economy," he declared. "We are the party of the social market economy."

He attacked the "left", meaning the Greens and the Social Democrats, and positioned his party in the political centre. The economy was booming, and jobs would be created galore – eventually. The opposition were to blame for the legislative gridlock pre-

venting the implementation of urgent reforms, especially in taxation. He had said all those things before. "This is the third time I had heard this speech in the past week," confided the prime minister of one of the eastern Länder. The Chancellor had apparently tried it on party grandees before rattling it off for the Leipzig audience.

Some were not impressed. Much was expected of the *Junge Wilde*, the rebels who had been openly calling for new blood in recent months. Klaus Escher, the chairman of the CDU's youth wing, came closest to mounting an open attack.

"We need a leader beyond 1998," he told delegates. Before the conference, Mr Escher had been more specific. Even if Mr Kohl were to win, he said, the Chancellor's hands should be prised off the party reins. Yesterday, Mr Escher conceded defeat and announced he was folding his tent for the duration of the election campaign. But he continued his critical barrage, especially against the government's appalling jobs record. In Britain and the Netherlands, Mr Escher told delegates, the shops had "help wanted" signs

on their doors. "On German shops the sign says: 'To let'." He bemoaned the "deficit of ideas" on government benches. After the elections, he said, there has to be a discussion over "how one hands over the baton".

That may be a little unkind to a man who is only 67, has won power four times, and who has every chance of winning again in elections due next September. But despite economic growth heading for 3 per cent, unemployment is still rising, and the government appears powerless to reverse the tide. The structural reforms promised by Mr Kohl 15 years ago remain just that: a promise.

Thanks to the opposition's own-goals – the Greens have just unveiled their election manifesto, which calls for the dissolution of Nato – Mr Kohl's party are favourites to win next year. Never in post-war history have Germans voted a Chancellor out of office. That task is usually reserved for the party faithful. As the Christian Democrats' love affair with Helmut Kohl turns stale, regime becomes increasingly alluring. Such talk must, however, be suspended for the moment. The Chancellor must win first.



A Georgian policeman arresting a protester at a rally in Tbilisi yesterday. About 500 people had gathered to pay homage to the Georgian national hero Merab Kostava on the eighth anniversary of his death. Photograph: AP

Italian coalition offers olive leaf to Communists

Leaders of the caretaker Prime Minister Romano Prodi's centre-left coalition said yesterday that they were willing to compromise with hard-line Communists in order to form a new government. The Communist Refoundation party responded to the offer by giving its leader Fausto Bertinotti the go-ahead to begin negotiations.

Mr Prodi quit last week, after Refoundation refused to back the budget plan which includes £3bn (£1.8bn) in pension and other spending cuts, which the government deems vital if Italy is to enter the European economic and monetary union.

The Olive Tree coalition warned to Mr Bertinotti following a meeting with President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, during which they asked him to re-confirmed Mr Prodi as prime minister. "We think that we can and we must rebuild the parliamentary majority which emerged from the April 1996 elections," said Mauro Paissani, leader of the Greens party.

President Scalfaro has said he will decide by today whether to call early elections, ask Mr Prodi to try to form another coalition, or give the task to someone else.

Quake sends Greeks rushing into the streets

A strong earthquake shook Athens and south-western Greece yesterday, shaking buildings and sending people in coastal towns running from their houses. There were no initial reports of damage, but the Athens Seismological Institute (ASI) said the tremor registered a relatively strong 5.5 on the Richter scale. The ASI said the quake's epicentre was 150 miles south-south-west of Athens, about 60 miles into the sea. Police said people in Pirgos and Kalamata, which have been hit by destructive quakes before, ran out of their homes and stood in the street fearing that buildings would collapse.

Centre takes over in Norway

Norway's Labour minority government resigned, paving the way for Kjell Magne Bondevik and a new three-party centrist coalition to take power. The Labour Prime Minister, Thorbjørn Jagland, announced the resignation of his 12-month-old government to parliament after it had presented the draft budget for 1998. Mr Jagland had said he would stand down after the Labour Party failed to win a self-imposed target of 36.9 per cent of the popular vote in last month's general election. King Harald V asked Mr Bondevik, of the Christian People's Party, to form a new government.

France bans 'hit squad' book

A Paris court ordered a halt to sales of a book alleging two former cabinet ministers ordered the murder of a member of parliament almost four years ago. The civil court, responding to an appeal by former defence minister François Leotard for censorship of the book about the death of Yann Plat in February 1994, ordered a suspension of distribution and sales until 24 October. The book alleges Mr Leotard and former urban affairs minister Jean-Claude Gaudin ordered Ms Plat's killing by a secret hit squad after she uncovered plans to sell plots of army land to the Mafia.

Belgian MP assaulted girls

A member of parliament for the Belgian extreme right-wing Vlaams Blok party was given a six-month suspended jail sentence for indecent assault on two teenage girls. Xavier Buisseret was also stripped of his civil rights for five years. Buisseret was accused of having sexually molested the two daughters of another Vlaams Blok party member in 1992 and 1993 when he was secretary of the party's youth division. One of the girls was 17 and her sister younger than 16.

Terror attacks greet trial of Basque leaders

Spanish courts have put 23 Basque political leaders on trial over alleged support for terrorism. Elizabeth Nash in Madrid says the action may undermine the wave of public revulsion against the separatists' violent tactics.

The Supreme Court trial of 23 leaders of the pro-Eta Herri Batasuna party opened yesterday in Madrid, amid seething tension in the Basque Country where a number of terrorist attacks took place at the weekend.

Yesterday afternoon in Bilbao, a police officer was shot in the shoulder while guarding the new Guggenheim Museum which opens on Saturday.

The entire leadership of the HB party, which won 12 per cent of Basque votes in general elections in March last year, is charged with "collaborating with

an armed gang" by issuing an election video calling for the government to talk to Eta gunmen.

The trial was postponed from last Monday when HB's defence claimed unsuccessfully that one of the three judges was biased. Yesterday HB called for the trial to be suspended, or shifted to the Basque Country, because of "an atmosphere of pressure in favour of a conviction". The defence says HB's position in the campaign video – which showed masked, armed men urging their vision of "alternativa democracia" – was already public knowledge.

The Interior Minister, Jaime Mayor Oreja, said in a newspaper interview: "I have the moral and political certainty that Eta is HB and HB is Eta." But he added: "I cannot say whether there is a judicial reason to apply a criminal action to HB."

The 23 each face eight years' jail, if found guilty. They are also accused of defending terrorism by publicly supporting Eta's assassination in 1996 of two

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Alexander Walker-Naddell rejected the conventional representation of spinal anatomy
Photograph: Colin McPherson

Norway



DR PHIL HAMMOND

Sixty years ago teaching hospitals hid sub-Minstral singers and slush-happy surgeons: so what progress have we made since then?

Thankyou, thankyou, thankyou to John Lord, the eagle-eyed sub-librarian at the University of London library. Back in July, I published a letter from a retired doctor who reminisced about his time as a "Christmas Nigger" at Guy's Hospital. I subsequently received a small clutch of hate mail from Guy's alumni denouncing the letter as a fraud and berating me for blemishing the good name of the flagship of the Tory reforms. Well, John was flicking through some old periodicals when he stumbled on Guy's Hospital Gazette, Vol. 1 (New Series) 1936 (p7).

"The Niggers, Christmas, 1935: The group of coloured gentlemen gathered before a camera on the steps of the Colonnade on the morning of Christmas Day were not, as we heard an old lady suppose, distinguished visitors being introduced to the hospital by its chaplains. It is true, however, that in a sense they were missionaries. They were, in fact (reader, you have guessed it), the 'Niggers' performing their annual mirth mission."

What follows is a five-page review, including a photograph of 29 boot-blacked Guy's doctors. To be fair, the racism doesn't permeate further into the act except for a tendency for these white, ex-public schoolboys to refer to each other as "Massa." Their songs "warmed us in the verse and brought us to fever pitch in the second" and had a distinctly macho flavour, eg:

"Oh! We do like to open the abdomen, / Oh! We do like to play with all the guts, / Oh we do like to see the blood go splash, splash, splash! / As the RSO goes slash, slash, slash. / So just send us up your favourite pa-

tient! / We'll wield a very pretty knife! / Four we are four house wizards! / And we'll whip out all your gizzards! / We're doing service, we're saving life."

Have you guessed the time? Of course all this was more than 60 years ago, when every teaching hospital may have had a sub-Minstral singing troupe and it was perfectly acceptable for unsupervised junior surgeons to go slash slash slash and whip out your gizzards. But what progress have we made since then?

Guy's medical school has now merged with St Thomas' and both have a sufficiently enlightened admissions policy that no-one need use stage make-up to effect a multicultural mix. But racism remains a big problem in medicine. In 1992, Drs Sam Everington and Aneez Esmail sent fake applications to junior hospital doctor posts, identical in all but surname. Half were Asian, half Anglo-Saxon. The latter were twice as likely to get an interview. The research was repeated this year, with marginally less depressing results.

The pair also discovered that the GMC was six times more likely to discipline an ethnic minority doctor than a white doctor. This was not due to a persecution of ethnic minority doctors, but rather that white doctors are far more likely to get away with misconduct. This research led to an internal inquiry within the GMC and a number of "racial awareness" reforms.

At present, 23 per cent of all NHS hospital doctors come from ethnic minorities, yet only a handful of these reach consultant grade - while 69 per cent of staff grade posts (the consultants' skivvies) have non-white occupants. And if not

white doctors do make it to consultant their chance of picking up a lucrative merit award is a quarter that of white peers. The legacy lives on.

As for slash-happy surgeons, the image is perhaps a little unfair. The majority are as diligent as their experience and training will allow. In the Niggers' day, you could learn from your mistakes because patients didn't rise again in the mortuary (well, not often) and relatives didn't sue. Today, doctors are expected to get it right first time, every time. In a surgical context, the minimum requirement should be that the surgeon is competent to operate. Alas, audit is so backward in medicine that many surgeons have little insight into how competent they are - or if they do, they don't share it with the patients.

In June, Professor Janet Wilson from the University of Newcastle published a national survey that found that two thirds of all operations performed by surgeons in training are unassisted - even major operations being done for the first time. Senior house officers (hardly experienced surgeons) were left alone to do their first salivary gland excisions, hernia repairs and stomach, spleen and gall bladder removals with their senior "support" not even present in the hospital.

Most operations went surprisingly well, others didn't. But in all cases the surgeon couldn't give the patient the prior undertaking that he was competent to perform the operation or would be closely assisted by someone who was. This seems a bizarre and ultimately very unsettling state of affairs. Far less stressful to lie back, think of England and sing along with the Niggers...

VITAL SIGNS

Fatty fat is exactly that
Fatty acids rarely turn into fat adults. A US study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that only 8 per cent of obese infants were also obese as adults. By contrast, the study found that children who were obese at 10-14 years had 75 per cent probability of remaining so in adult life.

Not fungi to be with
A tea drink made from mushrooms and on sale in healthfood shops has been associated with toxic side effects by US

researchers. Writing in the *Journal of Internal Medicine*, they describe four cases where people were admitted to hospital after drinking Kombucha tea, which comes from the mushroom of the same name. One woman developed jaundice; another reported dizziness, nausea, vomiting and headaches.

Cancer treatment risks
According to studies by epidemiologists in Europe and the US, of 29,000 testicular cancer survivors, 1,406 developed a second cancer - 1.43 times

the expected number. Writing in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, they link second cancers in the stomach and bladder to radiotherapy treatment for testicular cancer, and cases of leukaemia to chemotherapy and radiotherapy. They raise particular concern about cisplatin, a drug in use for testicular cancer, as it persists "in numerous tissues long after treatment is completed." They stress the need to monitor the carcinogenic effects of treatment, as a preventive measure.

Cherrill Hicks

Does this man understand something about back pain that nobody else knows?

As anyone with back trouble knows, all cures, or even half-cures, are gratefully received. Chloe Leland's story of vertebral discs and one man's belief that you don't need them.

Today my mother sneezed without it hurting her for the first time in over a year; this is because she has undergone a revolutionary cure for two slipped discs. The non-surgical method, administered by a distinguished Glaswegian surgeon, involved nothing more complicated than a job of local anaesthetic and a few brief sessions on his couch.

Alexander Walker-Naddell, a consultant orthopaedic and neurosurgeon, developed his technique after years in which he became increasingly dissatisfied with the results of conventional surgery for back problems.

At 87, he is one of Britain's oldest practising doctors, with a private orthopaedic surgery in the centre of Glasgow. He numbers Stanley Baxter, Max Bygraves and the Scottish golfing star, Craig Breedlove, among the many celebrities to whom he has brought relief from back pain.

Before her remarkably brief encounter with Mr Naddell my mother, aged 50, had undergone traction, chiropractic and osteopathic treatment for two severely slipped discs in her lower back. She had slept on hard beds, soft beds and in various contorted positions, but with no result other than continuous, debilitating pain.

She was finally told by a highly reputable neurologist that she would need surgery to remove the discs and replace them with metal plates in an operation known as a laminectomy. She could look forward to a six-month, bed-ridden convalescence with less than a 50 per cent chance of successful recovery. For a woman who lives for and thrives on physical activity, the prospect of never being allowed to garden or to take long walks in the countryside again was both terrifying and depressing.

There was even a risk of paralysis, which sometimes results from a vertebral column operation. As a family we ended up discussing her will over dinner and what action she would want us to take if the operation was to go wrong. Then enter Mr Naddell and, as if by magic, today my mother has just charged off up her favourite hill without even a twinge of pain.

Mr Naddell developed his technique at Glasgow Royal Infirmary nearly 40 years ago, after spending a decade dissecting bodies in the hospital's pathology department. "I didn't accept the anatomy of the spine as it was presented to me in the books," he comments, "so I had to find out for myself."

His research led to an astounding discovery. "I studied thousands of bodies and found that many of them did not have any vertebral discs. I then contacted their families and found that 90 per cent of the deceased had never experienced back problems. We do not need our discs; they are not an essential part of one's anatomy."

Mr Naddell maintains that the discs are not, as is com-

monly thought, the shock-absorbers of the spine, but the vestigial remnants of a primitive structure seen only in the foetus. The shock-absorbing role referred to is actually played by the fibrous ligaments surrounding the discs. These are made up of rings of cartilage which act as a coil or spring between the opposing vertebrae.

A slipped disc can be caused by constant wear and tear or a sudden strain on the back. It is the protrusion of the jelly-like substance which forms the disc through a tear in the ligament, which causes pain if it strikes a nerve root. By removing the disc, the pain is eradicated.

Mr Naddell's technique is simple. His consulting room is small, cosy, and festooned with military medals and he welcomed us in a relaxed manner with a smile. He required no X-rays or description of previous diagnosis made by other consultants, informing us that "I must make my own investigations or I wouldn't be giving it my best shot."

During his investigations and the whole of his treatment, my mother never even had to remove her shoes; she simply had to hold up her jumper so that he could examine her back. Then, using the largest, fleshiest thumb that I have ever seen, resulting from Mr Naddell's days as a champion student boxer, he proceeded to diagnose the condition using only touch, describing the symptoms that the neurologist and orthopaedic surgeons had required scans to detect.

The only instruments that he uses other than his thumbs are a hammer to test reflexes, aiding his diagnosis, and a syringe to inject a local anes-

thetic into the affected area. "There does not need to be any fuss. It seems to me an unfortunate medical practice that, in order only to confirm a diagnosis, one should actually aggravate the condition one is about to try and clear up. I don't believe it is necessary to cause further pain to the patient with my diagnosis and treatment."

The treatment involves strong pressure on the disc with his fleshy thumb. By using the jagged edges of the ligament through which the disc is poking, he simply breaks off the protruding piece of vertebral disc. Now cut off from its food supply, this will then waste away.

Next, on an orthopaedic couch disguised by a tartan rug (her shoes still on), he begins to gradually straighten out my mother's spine, through manipulation of her leg and pelvis. Throughout the treatment Mr Naddell chats about the weather; although it is raining, he comments "the sun is shining somewhere", and we leave the surgery after only 30 minutes.

We return for five more 15 minute sessions over three days, but my mother's spinal pain has disappeared after only the second session. Between the treatments, she has to undertake specific exercises four times a day to encourage any remnants of the discs to slip out of the ligaments so that Mr Naddell can break off the protrusions, until all the offending discs have been removed. She is then given a training programme to carry out for at least two weeks after the treatment.

The treatment seemed so painless and undramatic that it has taken some time for my mother and I to be finally convinced that it has worked. But the continuing lack of pain and the file full of letters from patients thanking Mr Naddell for his treatment substantiate his claims of a high success rate. "I've been practising for nearly 40 years now and my very first patients are still fit and healthy. I have letters of thanks here from thousands of patients from the four corners of the globe. I rely wholly on word of mouth and my reputation because the medical profession are not allowed to advertise."

He remains, however, disheartened that his technique has not been more widely taken up. "I have said to many surgeons, 'show me a perfect, surgical result as good as mine and I'll change my methods' - and they never have. I don't know why they won't listen to me. They continue to put this ironmongery into people's backs. Bone and metal just don't mix."

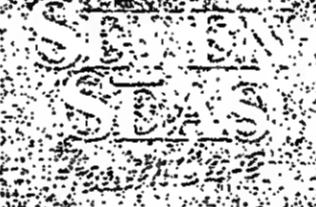
As proof, Mr Naddell thrusts a letter at us from a reputable Glaswegian orthopaedic surgeon which states that, following examination of one of Naddell's patients, "there is no indication for any surgical investigation or intervention at this stage. Indeed, if I had operated upon this patient myself I would regard this as a very good result." Many other surgeons have shown an interest in Naddell's work but as yet there has been no scientific trial of his simple technique.

He will not give up, however. As we leave his consulting room for the last time, he promises, with his usual hepatic smile: "I will never retire. When I go, I will go with my boots on."

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Is there still life in the 20th century?

A furry tea-cup, a shiny vinyl typewriter, a bicycle wheel mounted on a kitchen stool, a basket-ball hanging in salt water. What do they have in common? That's a question the Hayward's latest show doesn't quite answer.

Picasso's painting *Still Life with Pitcher and Apples* shows a piece of set-up tableware. The jug is made woman, its texture rendered as if it was the heavy flesh of one of his neo-classical furies, its slow curves and protuberant bulges formed into suggestions of neck and breasts, or waist and buttock. But these transformations are quite tactfully done, just a slightly more explicit version of the sort of body-metaphors that are present in much old still-life painting. A still life it undoubtedly remains.

Meret Oppenheim's surreal *Object* is another piece of set-up tableware. Its teacup, saucer and tea-spoon are made woman, all furred with a covering of fur, giving the receptacle maybe a pubic hairiness, certainly allowing all sorts of connections and jolts to happen between smoothness and roughness, use and ornament, the domestic and the erotic. But, of course, though Magritte might have painted a furry cup, this isn't a painting, it's a real object. And is it still a still life?

How much does it matter that its body-metaphors are not got by visual persuasion, but by a straight juxtaposition of materials and their associations? Or that there's no real tradition of still-life sculpture for it to find a place in? And then, how about Duchamp's junction of a bicycle wheel and a kitchen stool, or Warhol's painting of blank rows of labelled soup-tins, or Oldenburg's soft typewriter made of shiny vinyl, or Jeff Koon's basket-ball suspended in a tank of salt-water - are these things still lives too?

I'm not sure I know how to answer those questions, and I probably wouldn't have asked them or thought they were worth asking if it weren't for "Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life", an exhibition organised by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which now fills the whole of the Hayward Gallery in London. The still life - from Cézanne to now - is the plan, and naturally there's a lot of work where the

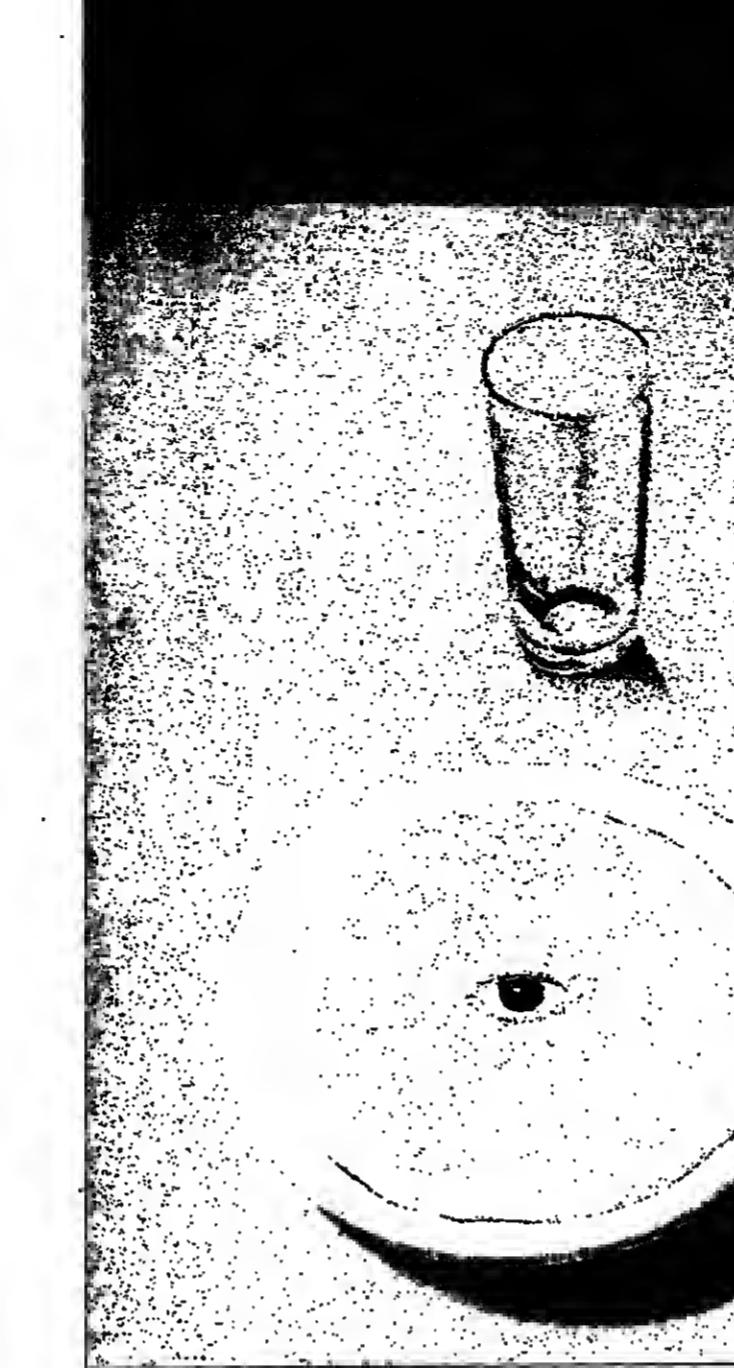
genre-label is unarguable or at least arguable - Cubist still lives, Surrealist still lives, Metaphysical still lives, Purist still lives, Matisse still lives. Anyone who just wants painting has more than enough to fill an afternoon.

And then there's a lot besides: for example, all those works mentioned above, ready-mades and found or altered objects. Pop art reproductions, neo-Pop constructions. For the range and abundance of its contents this is certainly a show to be seen. Indeed, by its eclecticism, which allows it to include almost all the big names and chapter headings of the century (abstraction being the big exception), it can extract from the "still life" rubric what's virtually a little history of modern art.

But even a little history of modern art is a large and complicated thing. To praise the exhibition as a whole for its range isn't wholly praise. This is not a permanent collection, to be visited and revisited over the years. And a show where the viewer is asked to turn on an aesthetic sixpence at every corner (for such is the history of modern art) can't but encourage inattention to individual exhibits, in favour of a gilding wonder over the kaleidoscopic array, the great party that's been got together. All these things - all still lives? Well, fancy! What that? And that too?

"Objects of Desire" has too much of an eye on itself as an embracing spectacle. It offers a drama of the one and the many: the one genre and its many, many different examples, with the anthropologist's glee at the sheer variety of things that can (at a pinch) be brought under one roof, which tends to reduce everything to being one more example. There's also a drama of estrangement. Rather as Magritte, in one of his paintings here, gets a mind-bending charge from labelling a leaf as "*le tableau*" and a jug as "*le fruit*", so there's a pleasing strain in looking at (say) one of Jasper Johns's flag-paintings, also here, and trying to call it "*la nature morte*" - ooh, a just-about, sort-of, stretch-the-point still life. It doesn't quite figure, and that's the kick. And so what?

It's not a matter of defending the purity of the genre against intrusions, or of dissing the Jasper Johns (though the particular flag-painting shown isn't painted so intensely as some other versions). It's simply that it's hard to see what is gained by putting it in hopeful dialogue with pictures by Gris or Miró or Léger or Morandi. More or less ingenious connections can be drawn, as can be drawn between anything and anything. A very general heading of "everyday objects removed from their



everyday setting" can be applied to every work in the show, from Cézanne's tabletop landscape to Warhol's "Brillo Boxes" (if, that is, you're prepared to be very flexible with the meanings of "everyday" and "removed"). But a lot of big differences

get suppressed in the process.

I think that's the object, though. The idea is to smooth art history out. I don't deny that following the course of still life turns up some good history too: particularly around Cubism. Cubism was largely

René Magritte's "Portrait", 1935: a representative slice of Surrealist still life or just an example of a show with too much of an eye on itself as all-embracing spectacle?

Photo: Museum of Modern Art, New York

invented on still life (the easiest subject to have your pictorial way with). It was cubist still life that invented collage (the bits and pieces of real stuff that Picasso and Gris started to stick to their paintings). It was Cubism that invented true still-life sculpture (like Boccioni's bronze *Development of a Bottle in Space*). And, if you will, these things can be seen to segue into various lines of found-image and found-object work.

But there it seems more important to insist that Duchamp did and what Warhol did really were ruptures, and that what's presented here is an essentially emollient history of modernism. Still life is being used in this capacious way to make things hold together. The approach is very characteristic of the New York Museum of Modern Art, which has always sought to subdue both conservative fears and radical hopes that 20th-century art has exploded in all directions, in favour of keeping the show on the road, as a lively but unbroken relay of bright ideas. This is friendly, but it's false.

What's more, this approach tends to minimise the main benefit that any anthology offers: turning up obscurities. The show is so keen to bring all the famous names under its umbrella to prove that still life is a big central story of modern art, that it doesn't have much room for real finds. But there are a few good ones (relative to my own ignorance, of course), mostly in the later rooms. There's Robert Therrien's perilously stacked pile of giant-sized dishes and bowls, for instance, and Mario Merz's very simple, joyful, harvest-festival-spirited *Spiral Table* - a spiral of metal trellises heaped with fresh fruit and veg.

And the exhibition has a lovely end in Wolfgang Laib's *Milkstone*, a large low tray of pure white marble, filled up to the very rim with milk, so that what's solid surface and what's liquid surface tension are held in nearly indistinguishable stasis (though an old Eric and Ernie routine involving kettle drums comes to mind too).

Perhaps, by this point, most viewers won't be thinking about "The Modern Still Life", in all its likely and unlikely guises, at all - just treating the show as a generous miscellany from which to take their pick. Really, that would be the best starting position too.

10am-6pm daily (Tue/Fri to 8pm), until 4 January, Hayward Gallery, SBC, London SE1. Tickets £5. Booking: 0171-960 4242. Sponsored by BMW

Beauty only skin deep: in Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's "Five Women on the Street" there is a sharp edge of danger beneath the flaunting and display

Ludwig Museum, Cologne

Bridge to Utopia or blue ride to hell?

A comprehensive exhibition of Expressionism - from brutal introspection to colourful optimism - is

on display in Venice. Andrew Lambirth happily recommends the dark and dangerous journey in search of the soul.

The Expressionists tried to create images that conveyed states of mind. They went all-out for an emotional impact, achieved by way of exaggeration and distortion. In 1905 a group calling

itself Die Brücke, or The Bridge (to the future), was formed by Kirchner, Heckel and Schmidt-Rottluff, amongst others. This was the real beginning of Expressionism. Another sub-group calling itself Die Blaue Reiter, or The Blue Rider, came into existence in 1911 under the leadership of Kandinsky and Marc. They painted from "compelling inner necessity" and hoped for a harmony between life and art. The attitude was spiritual and idealistic. Before the First World War shattered so many illusions, they strove for Utopia, although, with hindsight, the Expressionist goal seems more like its opposite - an angry hell of festering selfhood, of suffering and brutalisation. Going inward in search of the soul was a dangerous journey. Several artists, like Kirchner, suffered mental breakdown en route.

In Venice now, at the Palazzo Grassi, is a remarkable show of German Expressionism. The Palazzo Grassi, designed in 1740 by the distinguished Venetian architect Giorgio Massari, was bought by Fiat in 1984 and lavishly restored. A series of seminal exhibitions has since been staged there, ranging from "The Phoenicians" to "Andy Warhol", and all emanating from Fiat's impressive role in cultural sponsorship.

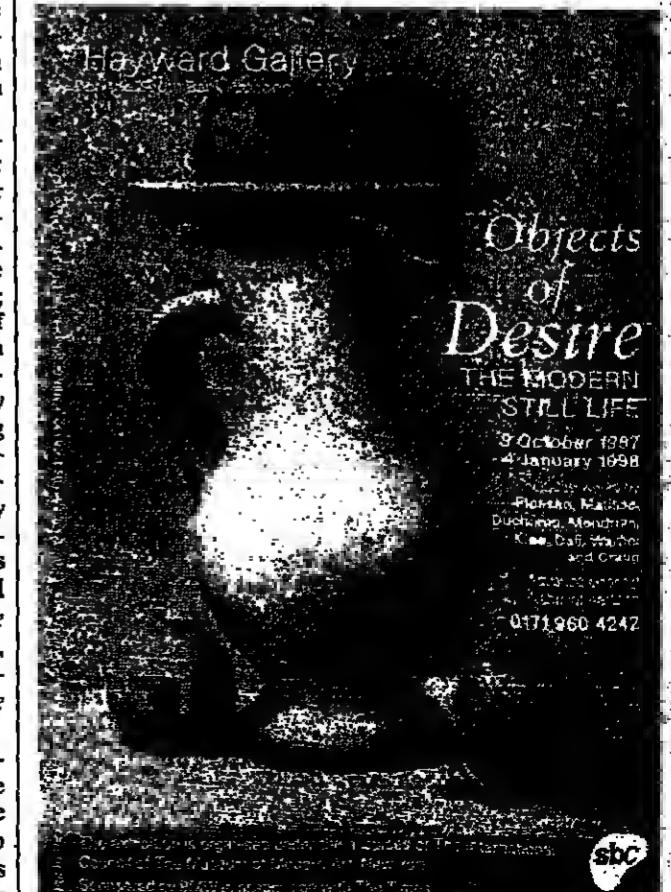
"German Expressionism" starts out with a room of troubled and melancholy self-portraits. The very first you see is by Otto Dix, a harsh depiction of himself as a soldier, all belligerent sneered paint like bloodied mud. Here the long dark night of the Northern soul finds expression; how very far from the sunny rationalities of Mediterranean classicism. A wonderful low-key self-portrait by Oskar Kokoschka depicts him as wistful to the point of being terrified. But there had to be some relief from introspection, and many of these artists went off to paint and frolic on Baltic beaches. Otto Muller, Max Pechstein and Kirchner all did successful al fresco nudes. One



way? I suppose, if the show is intended to be a historical survey, then the lesser artists do prove that the organisers have done their research. But I'm not convinced that Heinrich Ehmann and Walter Jacob, among others, contribute much. Otherwise, the exhibition is well-paced, elegantly and spaciously hung, with the graphic work (including prints, publications and posters) backing up the paintings.

It is also themed, divided into different subjects such as "Hell and Paradise, Man and the Metropolis". This is more of a distraction than a help. Curators should not be encouraged to force an argument on to art. Paintings are much more than examples to illustrate a theory. What is useful, however, is the audio-visual room.

German Expressionism: Art and Society, Palazzo Grassi, San Samuele 3231, Venice, to 11 Jan, open daily 10am-7pm



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مكذا من الأصل

Why you'd choose to be a woman – 100 good reasons

Debbie Boham is full of reasons to be cheerful about being female. Incidentally, the men's magazine 'GQ' celebrated its 100th issue this month by listing '100 Reasons Why It's Great To Be a Bloke'. Sad reading by comparison.

- 1: You can wear women's underwear without being arrested.
- 2: You can be sexually aroused in public without being arrested.
- 3: You can understand the mechanism of a bra strap.
- 4: You can be moody and anti-social on a regular monthly basis, without having to provide any rational explanation.
- 5: You can cry during *Sleepless In Seattle* and not have to blame it on hay fever and/or cat allergy.
- 6: You can correctly estimate the dimensions of the male genitalia.
- 7: You can become number one British women's tennis player simply by hitting a tennis ball – once – without it being out.
- 8: You can detect, by scent, when underwear needs changing.
- 9: You can be not interested in footy without being thought homosexual.
- 10: You can use public toilets at the same time as other members of the same sex without being thought homosexual.
- 11: You can fake orgasm convincingly.
- 12: You can observe a Bar-B-Q without urges to intervene.
- 13: You can remain silent whilst in a car with a woman driver.
- 14: You can blame being overlooked for promotion on "bloody male chauvinists" and the "Old Boy Network".
- 15: You can take full advantage of British Telecom's "Friends And Family" discount.
- 16: You can occupy a bathroom for over 15 minutes without the aid of pornographic literature.
- 17: You can make sexist remarks about the opposite sex without calling it "post-modern irony".
- 18: You stand a better chance of selection as a New Labour MP.
- 19: You can rely on not being charted up by Pania Yates ...
- 20: ... or by Michael Barrymore.

21: You can appreciate why scarlet crotchless leather panties are not, in fact, practical workwear for the female executive.

22: You can watch canine castration on *Vets in Practice* without wincing.

23: You can go into the lingerie department of Debenhams without the air of a fugitive.

24: You will never have to master the art of tying a bow tie.

25: You can dislike Pamela Anderson and like Clare Short.

26: When you reach the age of 60, your breasts can double as handy fly-swatters.

27: You can avoid carrying heavy items of furniture when moving house.

28: You understand what a two way dry-weave topsheet is necessary for.

29: You can happily spend an entire afternoon in The Body Shop.

30: Two words – colour co-ordination.

31: You can wear a ponytail and not look like a total prat.

32: You can see that you have got cellulite. It's obvious. Look.

33: After passing wind in public, you will not be compelled to utter the phrase "oi oi, better out than in".

34: You can communicate with women by telephone.

35: You can use pregnancy as an excuse for weight gain.

36: You can use "47 per cent of women are a size 16 or over – it's a fact" as an excuse for weight gain.

37: You can use "hormones" as an excuse for weight gain.

38: You can use "refusal to be influenced by anorexic models in *Vogue*" as an excuse for weight gain.

39: You don't have to worry about being a nine-stone weakling".

40: You can a) purchase tampons, b) read a map and c) eat quiche.

41: The words "falling sperm count" do not send shivers down your back.

42: You can urinate without leaving a small reservoir on the bathroom floor.

43: You can read the instruction



If a bad hair day is as bad as it gets, spare a thought for all those baldies

Photograph: Benelux Press/TCL

leaflet BEFORE assembling flat-packed furniture or operating electrical appliances.

44: You can carry a handbag.

45: You can find Jo Brand funny.

46: You will never be required to make an amusing Best Man speech at a wedding.

47: You don't have to worry that you might not be the real parent of your children.

48: You can expose your legs in hot weather and not look silly.

49: You can book a "massage" without embarrassment.

50: You can borrow your partner's clothes and not look perverted.

51: You can ask a complete

stranger for directions.

52: You can run "like a girl".

53: You never need be wary of scoutmasters with a glint in their eye.

54: You are less likely to give your private parts a pet name.

55: You can appreciate why double E-cup bosoms might sometimes be a disadvantage.

56: Women won't keep on hounding you for terrible ties and Old Spice for Christmas.

57: You can bear to own a car stereo that doesn't have quite so many knobs as your next door neighbour's.

58: You can drink spritzers in pubs.

59: During sex, you are unlikely to worry about climaxing too quickly.

60: You realise that "ready in five minutes" actually means three-and-a-half hours.

61: You can resist the compulsion to scratch your privates in public and photocopy your arse at Christmas parties.

62: You can keep your legs together when sitting opposite other people on public transport.

63: You partner will be PLEASED if you come home with lipstick on your face.

64: You can look at page three of the *Sun* without remarking loudly on the fact that you're really only reading the political story on page TWO.

65: When you reach your sexual peak, you're old enough to appreciate it.

66: You will never invite acquaintances to "smell my finger".

67: You can watch a woman peeling a banana without making lewd comments.

68: You can watch a woman removing an umbrella cover without making lewd comments.

69: You can watch a woman unwrapping a Cadbury's Flake without making lewd comments.

70: You can understand the grave severity of having a "bad hair day".

71: You can put a duvet cover on a duvet without asphyxiating yourself.

72: You can obtain nutritional sustenance without the aid of a microwave, a tin opener, or the telephone number of your local branch of Pizza Hut.

73: You can confess to having been dumped.

74: You can own a Renault Clio.

75: People will not automatically expect you to know how to play the guitar.

76: You can leave the plumbing to the plumber.

77: You are born with an instinctive knowledge of how many calories there are in any given foodstuff.

78: You can change a nappy in less than an hour.

79: Breasts are an attractive fea-

ture on a woman. As is red hair. Sometimes.

80: You can pack sensibly for holidays.

81: You will never wear jeans exposing your buttock cleavage, unless they happen to be fleetingly fashionable.

82: You can admit to being wrong about something ...

83: ... Even something as important as the Offside Rule.

84: Your status in society will never be dependent on how high you can piss.

85: You will never believe that a doner kebab is the ideal epicurean accompaniment for 15 pints of Special Brew.

86: Wearing a wig can be a fashion statement, not just a last resort.

87: Violent men are thuggish. Violent women are "feisty".

88: Men sweat. Women "glow".

89: If you claim to admire the Spice Girls because of their politics, some people will actually believe you.

90: You know the meaning of words like "exfoliation" ...

91: ... And "integrity".

92: You will never feel your masculinity threatened by large root vegetables, pepper pots or postcards featuring Nelson's Column.

93: You can appreciate that a woman who's just spent 30 per cent of her salary in Whistles can still have "nothing to wear tonight".

94: You can recall anniversaries other than Stoke City's first FA Cup win.

95: Your voice will never mutate overnight from Aled Jones into Barry White.

96: You can justifiably pass out during childbirth.

97: Your ability to concentrate is not inversely proportional to the bust size of adjacent females.

98: You have, statistically, more chance of finding a partner through newspaper contact ads.

99: You don't have to take mags like *GQ* seriously.

100: And finally – you just CAN, OK? Because you CAN. And if men don't understand that, then tough titties.

Norway

13: You can remain silent whilst in a car with a woman driver.

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The English can teach a lesson to the great football nations



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Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Minister and shares

Sir: Margaret Beckett in her letter to you (13 October) still refuses to clarify which shares Nigel Griffiths owns. She has received several letters from me as she declines to tell us if Mr Griffiths, or his wife, own shares in P&O and in ICI. Why will she not tell us? Her letter leaves open whether some shares have passed to them rather than his sister. I have always made it clear that if the shares were owned by Mr Griffiths' sister I could see no problem with him continuing on the inquiry.

Why will Mrs Beckett not publish a list of all the shares owned by ministers in her department, whether they are now transferred to a blind trust or not and on what date they were transferred?

I see Nigel Griffiths has been involved with "over 100 competition decisions and issues". Would Mrs Beckett name them, at the same time as publishing a definitive list of the issues and companies which Mr Griffiths cannot handle? Mrs Beckett has not clarified which papers Nigel Griffiths saw prior to announcing an interest on 8 May and what decision he took on P&O/Stena before he withdrew from the case.

JOHN REDWOOD
Shadow President of the Board of Trade
House of Commons

Into battle over EMU

Sir: So, with a combination of nudges, winks and denials, plus encouraging "come on in, the water's lovely" noises from across the Channel, the process of creating an atmosphere in which British participation in European monetary union (EMU) becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy has started.

Given the Government's pro-European, collectivist instincts, and the views of some big business, it is no surprise that an attempt is being made to bounce us into EMU. Everything possible should be done, however, to ensure that one of the most important decisions ever to face this country is not taken without the proper debate which has been lacking so far, and which proponents of EMU will try to avoid.

Whilst the euro should lead to very large savings in costs and a general simplification of busi-

"Unfortunately the past reputation of England fans has gone before them," a Football Association official said yesterday, stating the conventional wisdom about what happened in the stands at the Stadio Olimpico on Saturday. It is a piece of wisdom, however, that needs to be challenged if those scenes are not to be repeated in France at the World Cup next year. For the fact is the domestic reputation of English football fans is excellent and has been pretty good now for a number of years. Saturday afternoons and weekday evenings, especially in the Premiership, are not quite cases of social peace, but trouble in last weekend's terms just does not happen. Understanding why that should be so is a key to ensuring a better outcome when England visits abroad in future.

We have had the haggadocio, notably from David Mellor – his panting enthusiasm to drop an immediate and half-informed view, preferably anywhere near an open microphone is a bad augury for his

conduct of the official review of footballing policy. We have had the half-baked nationalism which prefers stereotypes to real-life diversity – not all Italian policemen are wonderful, but neither are all of them practising for a role in the Taviani Brothers' forthcoming epic of *Il Duce and his Blackshirts*. We have also had the – sometimes harrowing – tales of returning fans caught up in a bewildering situation not of their making, in which poor stewardship and bad organisation bear much of the responsibility. We also have the verdict of Italian courts on "fans" whose sporting instinct is provocation and putting the boot in. Our Rome correspondents' reports of the behaviour of these ambassadors of modern England make for dismaying reading; we look forward to the next Demos report on what to do about the brand image these louts project.

Except it is something they can only get away with abroad. Football in England – Scotland reorganised the game before and

Wales has never had similar problems, at least on any scale – has been cleansed. It took the Heysel and Hillsborough disasters to provoke action. On the latter there are questions of cause and effect outstanding, which Lord Justice Stuart-Smith's inquiry may finally answer; but Lord Taylor's report led to dramatic changes in both the safety and comfort in which most fans watch football. In recent years football has been modernised. Capacity has been cut, terracing bulldozed and replaced by seats. Clubs have turned themselves into commercial operations and some of them even treat their paying customers with a modicum of respect.

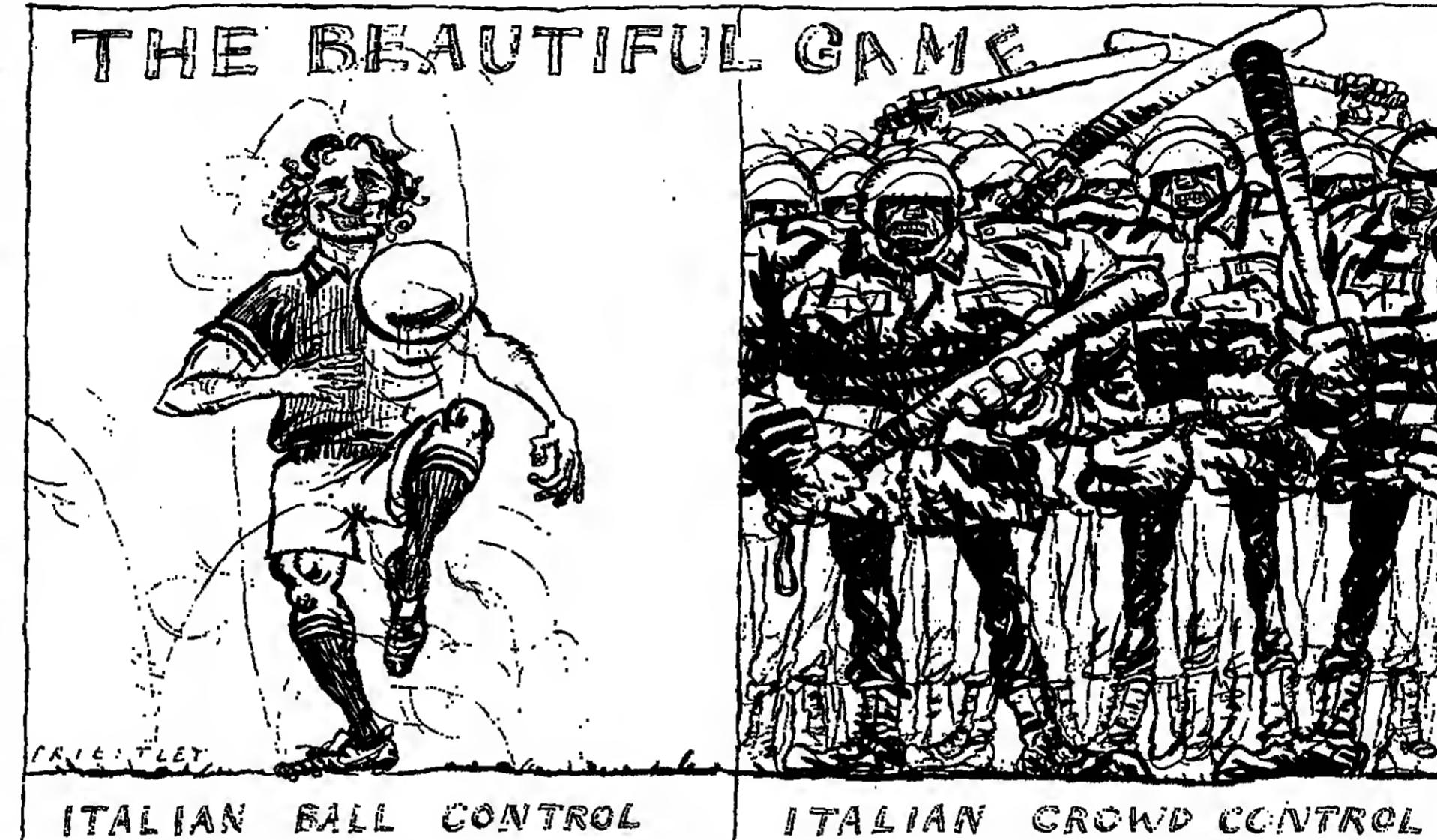
In parallel, probably without sufficient credit, the police have got their act together. They have been helped by the virtual disappearance of casual travelling – nowadays there are simply too few opportunities for irregular supporters to find their way in. Tony Banks yesterday identified travel control – or rather its lack – as one reason

for Saturday's mayhem. The courts have powers to block the movement of known troublemakers. And known they are, for the police, and the football authorities, have professionalised their intelligence gathering. One of the better consequences of the establishment of the National Reporting Centre and the other measures of centralisation that accompanied the miners' strike in the mid-Eighties was an end to petty regional rivalries among police forces, especially between provincials and the Met. Now that football clubs know who their supporters are – the lucky ones who qualify for season tickets – the task of identifying the trouble-makers has become easier. One very good reason why what happened at the weekend should not influence football's international authorities in their decision about whether to locate the 2006 World Cup in England is that it said nothing about English football conditions.

Indeed what it said was that other countries, including Italy, may have something

to learn from English techniques and experience, especially in terms of ticket management and big event stewardship. The relevant comparison is Euro '96: England's track record is outstanding. The English example says that "policing" is not just a matter of boys in blue, shields and batons; it is a question of cooperation from the very earliest stages of police forces, football authorities, transport undertakers, publicans and so on. Methods of ticket allocation are as much part of the package as body searches – necessary, surely, only where intelligence indicates individuals or groups likely to throw objects – at the ground. Every footballing country in Europe has its problem "fans" – including the otherwise pacific Dutch. Can the German and the Italian and the French authorities identify them readily as the English? That is a question which the French state should be asking with real urgency and demanding answers – not just from those countries which qualify.

LETTERS



ness transactions, and I have no objections to it in principle if it can work, nobody has managed to persuade me that a common currency can work in an area with such large disparities of income between member states, where member states are at different points in the business cycle and therefore require different interest rates, where labour is not mobile, and where there is no arrangement for redistributing wealth from the more to the less prosperous areas through a federal tax and benefit system, as in the US, from where warnings about the problems of EMU have recently begun to emanate.

If these questions cannot be answered satisfactorily, the assumption must be that EMU is likely to cause enormous social, economic and possibly political dislocation, the effects of which we could not avoid even if we do not join.

PETER JOHNSON
East Preston, West Sussex

Sir: Judging from what was said at Blackpool last week, it seems evident that the division between the pro- and anti-EMU viewpoints will now lie between the Labour government and Tory opposition. The Eurosceptics will, no doubt, feel encouraged by this to return to the type of nationalist propaganda which this country had to suffer prior to 1 May. The remark by a young Tory at Blackpool is a fair sample of what we can expect: "Europeans – they eat horses."

I hope that the Government will not delay any longer in informing the electorate of the issues surrounding EMU and follow this up with a clear statement of their intention to join, if not in the first wave then as soon as possible thereafter.

Whom should we believe on the single currency? The anti-European MPs and economists or the job and wealth creators, comprising thousands of in-

dustry and represented by the Confederation of British Industry and others who, in principle, support EMU.

SIR HAROLD ATCHERLEY
Chairman, European Movement, Suffolk and North Essex Branch
Long Melford, Suffolk

Sir: Last month, at the newsagent in Gozzano, Italy where I buy my *Independent*, I was handed a free floppy disk which, in graphic style sets out the case for Italy to join the EU marriage by this final act such as you find in over-cautious, xenophobic Britain.

DAVID ROWLANDS
Basingstoke, Hampshire

about the terms and constraints. There is little lack of will to consummate the EU marriage by this final act such as you find in over-cautious, xenophobic Britain.

Well, when you call someone third-rate, that implies that they are... well, third-rate.

I see, that is that?

Oh, yes. It tends to suggest that you think that they are not

here, but go on.

In the same way, you can't make football teams all top division. You can cheat a bit by renaming the First Division the Premier Division, and then moving the rest up so that the old Second Division becomes the new First Division and so on, but there are still going to be some third division teams. Indeed, there are some teams below that. There are all the Vauxhall Conference teams. A Vauxhall Conference team is below the Third Division, and yet it is never used as an insult. I mean, if the President of India had turned round and said...

Yes, but hold on. We all know there aren't many first-rate nations. Hardly any. In fact, there may not be any. There are some second-rate nations. There are also third, fourth and fifth-rate nations.

You can't have one rate with out having the other rates. We can't all be first and second rate.

Allegedly?

A reader writes: Dear Mr

Kington, I don't think it was the turning down of our offer to mediate that annoyed everyone. It was when the President of India described us as a third-rate nation.

Allegedly?

A reader writes: Yes, sorry. Allegedly described us as a third-rate nation.

... What is a Vauxhall Conference, anyway?

I don't know. I have always

visualised it as a large five-

door conference centre on

wheels, with small walnut

desks and every passenger

connected by screens, so that

silvery-haired executives

called Ted and Harry can get

together and drive up and

down the M1 and thrash out

deliver the carbon-dioxide reductions within the timescale and without political risk.

We have some of the worst

housing in Europe, and there

needs to be a national strategy

to bring the whole housing

stock to a standard of thermal

efficiency near to the current

regulations for new buildings.

The most urgent requirement

is for a review of the thermal

section (Part L) of the Building

Regulations. This needs to

be substantially tightened, so

that in the domestic sector we

are at least in line with com-

parable north European coun-

tries.

In commercial and institu-

tional buildings, we need to

justify the inclusion of air

conditioning. This was omitted

due to pressure from the of-

fices lobby. It should be rein-

stated, especially since the

Government has demon-

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high pollution to have a seat-

ed building which is never-

theless naturally ventilated.

The New Parliamentary Build-

ing in Whitehall will set new

standards for the offices

sector.

EARL DRAKE

pants. Where there have been corporate moves from an air-conditioned office to green accommodation there has been around a 15 per cent reduction in absenteeism.

Earlier draft buildings regu-

lations made it necessary to

justify the inclusion of air

conditioning. This was omitted

due to pressure from the of-

fices lobby. It should be rein-

stated, especially since the

Government has demon-

strated in an innovative build-

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theless naturally ventilated.

The New Parliamentary Build-

ing in Whitehall will set new

standards for the offices

sector.

EARL DRAKE

M15 opens the files

Sir: I am grateful to Anne Crawford of the Public Record Office for confirming that some of M15's historical files will begin to appear in the PRO next month (letter, 10 October).

After five years of rumours and unattributable hints from the spooks we have at last been favoured with a formal announcement just weeks before the files are to be opened. And this was only forthcoming because I provocatively quoted off-the-record comments by a PRO official. It's an incongruous way to launch a new era of openness.

This transfer of records, we are told, is "in line with the process routinely followed by other government departments", but it's no ordinary department that gets away with not depositing so much as a paper clip in the PRO for 85 years. Ms Crawford assures us that this exercise is not a "sop", but it's hard not to see it as another episode in M15's "charm offensive", as it tries to justify its existence after the Cold War. I intend to be first in the queue next month to see how much *glasnost* we're being allowed.

DAVID TURNER
Borden, Kent

What killed Dylan

Sir: About that Nashold/Tremlett book, which "reveals" that Dylan Thomas didn't die of drink (report, 13 October). This was discovered twenty years ago; by me. Half a grain of morphine unwise prescribed in New York did for him. The "acute alcohol poisoning" story hasn't been taken seriously for years.

Nashold and Tremlett produce evidence that he was a diabetic. Maybe he was. Constantine FitzGibbon's biography speculated about it in 1965. What matters is that Dylan Thomas came to feel about his poetry and his marriage, so that in the end he put himself in the way of dying, one way or another.

PAUL FERRIS
Brougham, Powys

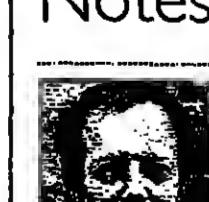
Social

late converts

Sir: Deathbed conversions are commendable. Post-mortem ones such as that of the Tory party, strain credulity.

ANTHONY WRIGHT
London, NW2

Notes towards the definition of a third-rate power



MILES
KINGTON

The Queen's visit to India might have gone totally unreported here if there had not been a diplomatic incident to live it up.

What do we mean by a diplomatic incident?

We mean quite the opposite. We mean an

The best of neighbours in Downing Street

DONALD
MACINTYRE
ON THE KEY
RELATIONSHIP

It remains the most important friendship in British politics. In and out of each other's offices every day since the middle of the 1980s, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have an ideological outlook and mutual understanding so deep that it's sometimes difficult to decide which of them thought of which idea first.

The relationship between Prime Minister and Chancellor, First and Second Lords of the Treasury, is always a complicated one. Some of those around Ken Clarke, for example, left office with the clear view that tensions between the Chancellor and the Prime Minister are built into the system; their relationship was better before, and has been better since, they lived next door to each other in Downing Street. But the intimacy and frequency of the contacts between Brown and Blair works in a way intended to get around that problem; Whitehall officials have been struck, and a little alarmed, at how often the pair meet without civil servants. The result is something that is less an institutional relationship between Numbers Ten and Eleven Downing Street, and more that of old friends – albeit for a brief but momentous period – who know each other extremely well and who can and do endlessly discuss in complete privacy the great issues of government and how to tackle them.

Nevertheless the Clarke-Major relationship, and before it that of Lawson and Thatcher, showed what an independent power base within the Cabinet a strong modern Chancellor can have. The one real scoop in the recent Channel Four documentary *Bye Bye Blues* was an interview with the former Tory chairman Jeremy Hanley who described, how, not once but twice, Clarke commanded a majority of the Cabinet against a minority which included the Prime Minister. On the first occasion Clarke forced through a decision in favour of his increasing VAT of fuel, only to be subsequently defeated in the Commons. On the second, Clarke successfully resisted the funding increase sought by the then Education Secretary Gillian Shephard. When the issue was forced to a vote, the majority went with Ken Clarke, even though John Major backed Mrs Shephard.

So it would not be surprising if, on those occasions when Blair and Brown do have differences, Brown sometimes got his own way. (A recent, if entirely internal Labour Party, example is the case of the selection of the candidate to fight the Paisley by-election. Gordon Brown conducted a formidable lobbying operation on behalf of Douglas Alexander, who is now the candidate. He will almost certainly be a first class MP. But another able candidate, Pat Macfadden, who works in the Prime Minister's policy unit dropped out after at least one meeting be-

tween Brown and Blair.) Still, on most of the big issues, the Prime Minister has chosen his ground carefully, and has eventually got his way. There are two important examples from before the election: Brown didn't get his new top tax rate of 50 per cent; and Blair insisted on matching the Tories' pledge to have an EMU referendum – even though Brown had at one period proposed making the manifesto commitment of support for the single currency sufficiently strong that the election itself would have provided a mandate to take Britain in.

Which helps to put the hot issue of the day in perspective. A spate of newspaper stories – the latest of which appeared yesterday in the *Daily Mail* and Glasgow's *Herald* – have predicted EMU entry in this Parliament. This has looked awfully like Brown's allies seeking to force the pace on the timing of British entry (though it could also be an attempt to talk down the job-threatening level of the pound). But whether or not Brown wants to go faster than Blair, all the signs are that the Prime Minister is still extremely wary about the timing of a referendum.

You can talk to ministers who will say that the momentousness of the risk is overestimated, and even that the Government could come back from a defeat in an EMU referendum. That isn't, I suspect, quite how the Prime Minister sees it. Before he and Robin Cook announce plans for the British EU presidency at the beginning of December, he and Brown will surely have agreed a statement confirming that the UK will not enter EMU on January 1, 1999, but that it intends to do so when the conditions – including the Europe-wide prospects on jobs – are right for British entry. For Britain to retain influence in the EU, while being outside EMU, that will have to be pretty convincing to Britain's partners. But the timing is another matter.

Of course a referendum before the next general election is possible. So is putting an EMU pledge in the next general election manifesto. But a referendum after the next general election is likelier still. There are ministers who say the Prime Minister would not want a referendum this side of an election unless he could persuade Rupert Murdoch's newspapers to drop their still vitriolic opposition to EMU. Whether or not that's true, public opinion will take time to turn round (not to mention a few prominent Cabinet sceptics like Jack Straw.) The Conservative Party – admittedly without Clarke and Heseltine but with Michael Portillo and Margaret Thatcher – would be galvanized, spoiling for the fight. Television would have to give equal time to both sides. Defeat might be highly unlikely, but it would be catastrophic.

For whatever siren voices say to the contrary, the Prime Minister would indeed be betting the ranch; it's hard to see how a government could come back from a referendum defeat on something so fundamental and win the second term Blair so badly wants – never mind the impact on Britain's future in the EU: forget about EMU membership for a generation.

The Brown-Blair relationship is at the heart of the Government's success. No-one knows better than Blair how indispensable a motor of modernisation Brown is. Probably these issues will all be settled in the ebb and flow of constant and comradely discussion between the two of them, well away from the spin doctors. But while Brown may be as strong as Clarke, Blair is not John Major. If it comes to it, Blair will not be for bouncing.

regards possession and dealing.

The many studies like this into every aspect of the subject could be collated and summarised without much difficulty and in double quick time. The Government should undertake this useful task of providing a briefing for the public; such a document would be a public service not a policy initiative.

The questions, at least, are clear. What are the effects of cannabis on the user? Does it lead to anti-social behaviour? Is it addictive? How does it compare to alcohol? Does it provide a gateway to the use of hard drugs? How much success has government policy had during the past fifteen years? What have been the costs of this policy? What can we learn from Spain and Italy, where decriminalisation has also taken place, and from the different policies adopted by US states, as well as from Holland? What are the medicinal uses of cannabis?

The answers will be found to lack precision. A Rochdale doctor told a recent conference of the British Medical Association that cannabis had unpleasant effects, such as distorting perception, reducing vigilance and causing apathy and indifference. But another

study declares that cannabis is a fairly mild hallucinogen or euphoriant. Are the two saying the same thing and do they imply that cannabis is more dangerous than alcohol?

Some of this can be sorted out. But not all. Any inquiry would be left with a series of answers that fall into wide ranges of probability. Nonetheless, the findings, taken together, would support the case for decriminalisation. That is why I think that the best approach that the Government could take would be to try to make progress by tiny steps, starting immediately. The poll in the *Independent on Sunday* shows that public opinion would be in favour. If ever there was a problem demanding an application of British pragmatism, this is it. I define a "tiny" step as one which could be reversed without embarrassment.

The new drugs "czar", for instance, whose appointment is due to be announced by the Prime Minister tomorrow, will no doubt observe that police policy towards possession of cannabis varies across the country. In some places, people are arrested and charged, in other areas they are only warned. It would be useful to compare and contrast the effects of these

different approaches. Indeed for this reason it might even be advisable to maintain this diversity for some time. Then, having gained confidence from this experiment, as I assume it would, the government would be able to state that national policy would be for the police to issue warnings rather than charges except in flagrant cases. If such a policy appeared to work safely, having tried it out for, say, two years, then it would not be such a big step to decriminalise possession altogether – except of commercial amounts. At this stage, dealing would still be a criminal offence.

It is in this pragmatic spirit that the Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, made a useful contribution to the debate last week. He said that he would look at the case for amending existing legislation so that cannabis could be prescribed by doctors for certain conditions, particularly for people with multiple sclerosis. California has already taken this step. The drug helps reduce tremors and spasms and it eases movement. AIDS sufferers likewise claim that it improves their appetite.

If these various measures worked well, then the next move would be more of a leap

than a step. The Government might well pause before taking it. For it would involve removing the trade in cannabis from the streets, from pubs and clubs and from criminal gangs and giving licences for its distribution to approved outlets. I am not sure that the United Kingdom would want to follow the Dutch pattern of allowing some 1,500 "coffee houses" to deal in small quantities. It might be that high-street pharmacies would be more suitable, seeing that their staff already have the appropriate training.

But we would do well to insist that licensed distributors follow the five rules that Dutch coffee shop dealers have to observe. As with alcohol, no sales to minors. That is obvious enough. Likewise no public disturbances, something for which British public houses can also lose their licences. A further rule is – no advertising. This is extremely important. The evidence from the years following the ending of prohibition of alcohol in the United States in 1933 is that it was the gradual increase in advertising that lifted consumption rather than de-regulation itself. There was no steep jump when the law was relaxed.

The Dutch also prohibit

هذا من الأصل

Nothing to rebel against – pity the poor conformists without a cause

GLENDA
COOPER
YOUTHFUL
DILEMMA

"Human beings make war and hate one another. They do not understand their young, they reject their ideals, they make them come home early from the disco. They are doomed." (From *The Concerned Adolescent* by Wendy Cope)

It's hell being young. No – really it is. No one understands you see. And no one cares about how dreadfully difficult it is to find something to rebel against these days.

Youth, as Bernard Shaw pointed out, is there to shock the old and keep them up to date. Well maybe in the past. But think about being an 18-year-old in 1997. You were born a Thatcher's child and you now have to adapt to a new caring, giving Blairite society. Your older siblings knew what they were against – the Tories – even if they weren't quite sure what they were in favour of. What can you do to show you're different?

Youth icons of today offer scant support for rebellion – do you choose the Spice Girls (in essence siding with Pepsi-Cola rather than Coca-Cola?), Chris Evans or Zoe Ball (Virgin vs Radio 1), or Oasis (hanging round Downing Street and sucking up to Tony Blair)?

The music industry has been particularly bad in letting poor adolescents down. Where is today's Eton Riffles (The Jam) or UB40 singing "I am a One in Ten", or even Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land" – the anthem of the International Trade Union Movement?

Instead on Sunday the Spice Girls played their first live concert – not a bad achievement for a band who have already had three chart-topping singles. "If you really wanna know, yes they can sing," said the *Daily Mail* yesterday. But what you should really wanna know about is the marketing.

While in the past bands may have worried more about social injustice, the Spiceys obviously have their heads screwed on the right way by allying themselves with a soft drink brand. All 8,000 or so people attending the concert had done so as competition winners for Pepsi-Cola. Pepsi has



The times they are a-changing: Bob Dylan sings for the Pope

Photograph: AP

received 12,000 applications a day for a Spice Girls single that can only be had by buying a can of the soft drink.

The proponents of Girl Power did remember to spout a bit of their philosophy: "We are five individuals who do not have to be the same," said Mel B (Scary). "You can start your own business and believe in yourself. But you must help your sisters," said Geri Spice.

But perhaps Posh Spice summed up their thoughts best. Asked if she would marry the England footballer David Beckham she replied: "That's none of my business... But he drinks Pepsi too," she parroted. Product placement like no other.

Marketing Week warned last week that the Spices were in danger of overkill – besides the Pepsi deal there is a link-up with Walkers crisps, an Impulse Spice range of scents, a tie-up with Chupa Chups lollipops, a Polaroid SpiceCam and a BT advertising campaign planned before Christmas.

How can an adolescent take such a marketed concept seriously? But then the Spices aren't alone in disappointing to

day's youth. Even Guthrie himself who inspired Pete Seeger in the Forties, Bruce Springsteen in the Sixties, Bruce Springsteen in the Seventies, now finds himself part of the establishment as one of the singers he influenced – Billy Bragg in the Eighties – has been chosen to be in charge of his archive material. Archive material!

What's the point of watching a real rock'n'roll band start their tour in Chicago when your dad next to you knows the words better than you do. And don't mention Bob Dylan. The man has yet another album out this month and he played for the Pope last month. Bob Dylan? Playing for the Pope?

And where's the excitement in telling your round-eyed parents that Noel Gallagher has compared drug taking to having a cup of tea when you open the papers the next day to find him snuggling up to the prime minister in Downing Street. You have to do a lot of spitting and swearing before you can regain your street cred after that.

Last week as well, former rock star Bill Drummond of the K Foundation warned rock

mad for Evans, no one's too important for him to slag off. But then even he as anti-hero hasn't got that much going. Why had he gone back to breakfast show radio (the commercial kind, mind you), he was asked. Maybe to cock a snook at the authoritarian BBC? For the kids? No. "The reason we came back to the radio is because we stopped getting things for free. We didn't realise how much we got for free since we came off and have had to pay for everything." He and his team had had free car loans and scooters in their time at Radio 1 and he had a Bentley at the weekend, he added. Bet that goes down well with the eco-warriors.

Ah yes the eco-warriors, the rebels with a cause in our time. Now there's something to rebel about. Honiton, Newbury and Lancaster, Manchester Airport, Swindon. What a time that was. But now there have been cut-backs in new motorways and bypasses, cycle lanes and paths are on the increase and John Prescott announced last month that he wants us out of our cars.

It's a bit difficult to lecture your parents on air pollution if the Deputy Prime Minister is saying it first and has a report by the Royal Commission on Environmental Protection behind him. It kind of takes the fun out of it as well.

There's not even much fun in being a student anymore by the time you've finished sorting out your loans and your £1,000 tuition fees, your first job and your overdraft. And then there isn't much time any more to sit around, get stoned and think about the meaning of life. If you can get to be leader of the Tory party by the age of 36 (William Hague), editor of a national newspaper by the age of 28 (Piers Morgan, who edited the *News Of The World* and now the *Mirror*) or have a novel published by the age of 18 (*Bidisha*), you obviously can't waste three years of university sitting around.

The point is today's would-be rebels need to sit tight. These things go in cycles. Some of us lived through the era of the New Romantics (radical to wear long frilly shirts) or even those highly political animals themselves, the Bay City Rollers. For every punk or flower power era there is a time when Celine Dion just has to top the charts. Grin and bear it.



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ANDREAS
WHITTEM
SMITH
LEGALISATION
OF MARIJUANA

A satisfactory inquiry into cannabis, its uses and abuses, and the role of the law, could be rapidly completed. There is no need for the cumbersome machinery of a Royal Commission to re-do the extensive research which has already been carried out into all drugs and their varying effects upon health, behaviour and crime. The latest issue of the American magazine, *Science*, for instance, contains a thorough analysis of the results of the Dutch experiment in liberalising the law on cannabis, both as

study declares that cannabis is a fairly mild hallucinogen or euphoriant. Are the two saying the same thing and do they imply that cannabis is more dangerous than alcohol?

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Merger mania: Four deals worth £67bn set Footsie soaring

The merger mania sweeping the stock markets reached new heights yesterday as the City salivated over four huge deals worth a total of £67bn. The unprecedented rash of corporate activity saw the FTSE 100 Index of leading stocks close 7.8 points higher at 5,300.1 points.

The £24bn merger between drinks groups Guinness and GrandMet cleared a crucial hurdle after Bernard Arnault, the flamboyant head of the French

luxury products group LVMH, dropped his opposition to the deal.

Meanwhile the Anglo-Dutch publishing group Reed Elsevier, whose titles include *Women's Own* and *TV Times*, announced a £19.4bn merger with Dutch rival Wolters Kluwer, and the roofing tiles group Redland found itself on the wrong end of a hostile £1.7bn bid from French building products group Lafarge.

To cap a remarkable day, shares in the

tobacco and insurance group BAT surged 10 per cent as dealers greeted the £22bn merger of its financial services businesses with the Swiss conglomerate Zurich.

The deal between Mr Arnault and Guinness-GrandMet comes just days before the European Competition Commission Karel Van Miert is expected to wave the merger, through provided the combined group dispenses of some spirits brands. Responsibility

for vetting the other three deals will also fall to Mr Van Miert because of their sheer size. The EC automatically investigates where the combined assets of the parties exceeds 5bn ECU (£3.5bn).

Mr Arnault, who has lobbied hard against the Guinness-Grand Met merger from the day one has reached agreement with the two groups whereby he will receive a £250m payment and emerge as the biggest shareholder in the combined

business with an 11 per cent stake. The merger will create the largest drinks company in the world and bring together a bewildering array of brands, incorporating anything from Johnnie Walker whisky to Gordon's gin.

The merger between Reed-Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer will create the world's largest scientific publishing and information group. Shares of Reed, Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer rose

sharply on news of the deal as analysts said it would give the combined group a more powerful position in the market for legal books and electronic information.

The bid by Lafarge for Redland came just days after the struggling building materials group admitted it was a takeover target and would create the world's biggest aggregates and roofing tiles company.

Market report, page 26

Arnault drops opposition to Guinness/GrandMet deal

The main threat to the £24bn merger between Guinness and Grand Metropolitan was removed yesterday when the two UK drinks companies reached an agreement with Bernard Arnault, the head of French luxury goods group LVMH who, until now, has been hell bent on scuppering the deal.

Andrew Yates reports on how the record breaking drinks merger is now virtually certain to go ahead.

Mr Arnault has called a truce in his fierce battle to overturn the merger between Guinness and GrandMet. After months of secret and heated negotiations which involved regular meetings between Mr Arnault and senior executives at Guinness and GrandMet, the two sides eventually thrashed out an agreement at 7pm on Saturday evening.

Guinness has agreed to pay Mr Arnault's LVMH group a lump sum of £250m cash. The Frenchman will also receive another £250m by way of a special dividend when the merger takes place early next year.

Mr Arnault will also take up a seat on the board of the combined drinks company, to be called GMG Brands, as a non-executive director.

In return, GMG Brands will be allowed to distribute LVMH's spirits brands such as Moët & Chandon Champagne and Hennessy cognac around the world.

GMG Brands believes the deal will save it £20m a year on top of the £175m cost savings the merger is already expected to bring. Mr Arnault also expects to reap savings of £20m, a third of which will find its way back to Guinness which owns a 34 per cent stake in Moët-Hennessy, the spirits business of LVMH. GMG Brands also believes the agreement will lead to a substantial rise in spirits revenues.

The agreement is also likely to have saved each group millions of pounds in legal and advisers' fees. Mr Arnault has called a halt to what promised to be a lengthy legal action against GMG Brands that could have cost the merged drinks group more than £1bn in compensation.

Mr Arnault has dropped his demands for a 35 per cent stake in a separately quoted drinks company and the merger of GMG's non-spirits businesses such as Burger King and Guinness' brewing division.

The dispute between GMG Brands and Mr Arnault started when the merger was announced in May and developed into a very bitter and public row.

Mr Arnault has spent more than £1bn buying up GrandMet shares to obtain a stronger position at the negotiating table in his determined attempt to scupper the original deal. He has also lobbied a host of institutional shareholders in Guinness and GrandMet on both sides of the Atlantic to garner support for his alternative merger plans.

LVMH is currently the largest shareholder in both the UK drinks group's with a 11.1 per cent stake in GrandMet and a 11.4 per cent holding in Guinness. This would entitle Mr Arnault to a stake of just over 11 per cent stake in GMG.

John McGrath, chief executive of GrandMet, said yesterday: "There were a lot of public histrionics which were out of order. Over the last few months we have had a whole series of private meetings to sort out an agreement. This is not a pay-off. It is an evolutionary deal ... that enhances shareholder value."

Tony Greener, chairman of Guinness, added: "This comes as a great relief. It gives us more flexibility and we can introduce new brands around the world."

The agreement removes the

main obstacle remaining for the merger, which will create a huge force in the world-wide drinks business, bringing together a vast collection of famous brands including Smirnoff

Vodka, Gordon's Gin and Johnnie Walker whisky.

However, the deal still has to be cleared by the European Commission and the Federal Trade Commission in the US.

Both are likely to demand GMG gives up some of its Scotch whisky brands. If the merger gets the green light it should be completed by January.

Philip Hawkins, a drinks an-

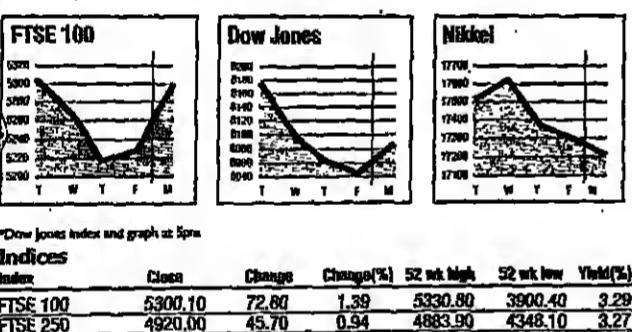
alyst at Merrill Lynch, said: "This is a pragmatic agreement. LVMH, which has had its own trading difficulties in the Far East, realises it was better off with the two strongest rivals. And

the deal looks cheap for GMG Brands at twice the price."

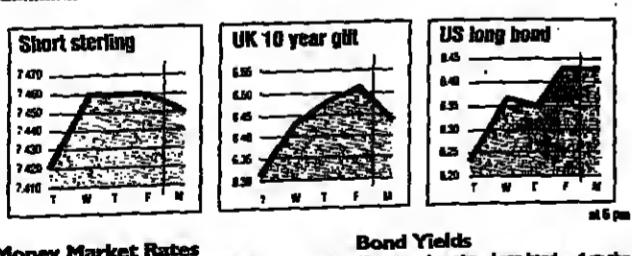
GrandMet's share price jumped 21p to 604p and Guinness' shares rose 28.5p to 605.5p.

Outlook, page 25

STOCK MARKETS



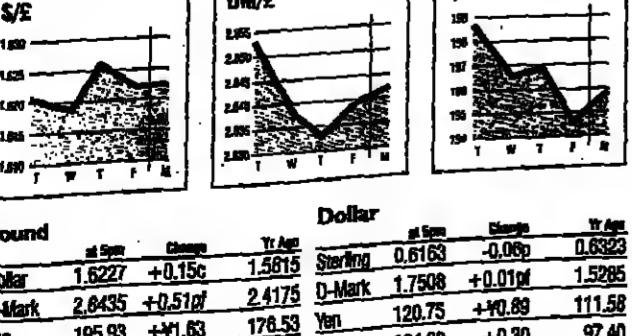
INTEREST RATES



MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Times	Price '96	Chg '97	% Chg	Falls	Price '96	Chg '97	% Chg
Redland	336.50	78.00	30.88	Alled Colloids	107.50	-1.02	-0.92
Reed Int'l	526.50	97.00	18.53	Premier Farnell	526.50	-24.50	-4.54
Galaxy Grp	329.00	34.00	11.76	RJB Mining	270.00	-5.00	-3.64
BAT Inds	609.00	56.00	10.62	Meyer Indl	433.5	-8.5	-1.97

CURRENCIES



OTHER INDICATORS

Com	Chg	% Chg	Index	Chg	% Chg	Rate	
Brent Oil (\$)	20.13	-0.61	23.40	GDP	112.80	3.50	109.0
D-Mark	2.6435	+0.5101	2.4175	D-Mark	1.7508	+0.0101	1.5295
Yen	195.93	+1.63	176.53	Yen	120.75	+0.89	111.98
£ index	100.40	+0.20	87.80	S index	104.80	+0.30	97.40

source: Bloomberg

Redland may split up in response to £1.7bn French bid

Redland's answer to a £1.7bn hostile bid from French building materials group Lafarge may be to break itself up. The cash bid would create the world's biggest aggregates and roof tiles business. But

Rudolph Agnew,

Redland's chairman, insists there are better ways to please shareholders than saying "oui" to Lafarge. Sameend Ahmad reports.

Rudolph Agnew, Redland's chairman hinted yesterday that the group may be considering a full-scale break up to defend itself against Lafarge, the French building products group which yesterday launched a £1.7bn hostile bid for the company.

Lafarge's cash offer at 320p

a share represents a hefty 45 per cent premium over Redland's 220p low struck just a few weeks ago after the group posted disappointing half year results and a 24 per cent premium to Redland's closing price on Friday. Redland has proved a terrible investment over the last few years.

A combination of a slowdown in Germany - half its business - the strong pound, bad weather and an ill-judged acquisition of a French business for which it overpaid has hammered its share price which stood at over 600p three years ago.

Although Mr Agnew would not give details about whether the company planned to sell off or float either its aggregates division, 30 per cent of sales, or its bigger roof tiles business, he indicated that some kind of demerger was likely. "That is clearly one of the considerations in our defence," he said. "This is an exercise in getting the true value of this company in play. We have to do

Reed Elsevier combines with Dutch rival to form £19bn publisher

Reed International, the UK publishing group which merged with Elsevier of Holland in 1993, is conducting another mega-merger that will make it an even greater force in markets such as legal publishing and on-line information.

Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, reports on a market where size is becoming increasingly important.

Reed-Elsevier is combining with Dutch rival Wolters Kluwer to form a group valued at £19.4bn.

Reed's chairman, Nigel Stapleton, said the new company, Elsevier Wolters Kluwer, would be the world's largest professional and scientific publishing group.

A break up plan could involve a trade sale of Redland's aggregates side with the company retaining its roofing business RJB. RJB is 43.5 per cent owned by German group Braas, which could leave Redland as a quoted vehicle for a partially owned company.

Redland's share price closed yesterday at 16.6p above Lafarge's offer price, indicating that the market expected a higher bid. Analysts questioned whether Lafarge shareholders would support Lafarge raising its offer significantly, given limited opportunities for cost savings from the merger.

Apart from the UK, there is little overlap between Lafarge and Redland's aggregates business.

Lafarge has no US operations and no experience of roofing tiles, 70 per cent of Redland's total sales.

Lafarge's cash offer at 320p

a share represents a hefty 45 per cent premium over Redland's 220p low struck just a few weeks ago after the group posted disappointing half year results and a 24 per cent premium to Redland's closing price on Friday. Redland has proved a terrible investment over the last few years.

A combination of a slowdown in Germany - half its business - the strong pound, bad weather and an ill-judged acquisition of a French business for which it overpaid has hammered its share price which stood at over 600p three years ago.

Although Mr Agnew would

not give details about whether the company planned to sell off or

float either its aggregates division, 30 per cent of sales, or its bigger

roof tiles business, he indicated

that some kind of demerger was

likely. "That is clearly one of

the considerations in our defence," he said. "This is an exercise in

getting the true value of this com-

pany in play. We have to do

cr. "This is about new technology and the need for scale. This is not a merger driven by cost-reduction," he said.

Mr Stapleton added that the combined group would continue to invest in the development of electronic material such as on-line information and CD-Rom products.

Analysts welcomed the deal, saying that in addition to the cost-savings, the product ranges of the two groups were complementary and it would eliminate a major competitor from the market.

Reed International's shares soared 97p to 629p, making them the day's best-performing blue-chip.

Louise Bardou of Henderson Crosthwaite said: "The businesses are complementary and it is a case of one plus one equals three. It eliminates a competitor in the law and tax sector and provides opportunities for creating new business."

She added: "The market is changing rapidly and becoming more concentrated on who can provide the content. This will give them more clout."

BAT investors welcome demerger plan

Investors in BAT yesterday reacted enthusiastically to the group's confirmation that it planned a £22bn to £24bn merger of its financial services arm with Zurich Insurance.

The confirmation also triggered a wave of

merger speculation in the insurance sector. Leo Paterson reports.

Shares in BAT Industries, the giant tobacco and financial services group, leapt by more than 10 per cent yesterday to close at 609p as the City absorbed the news

they hope it will boost the value of BAT's tobacco arm, currently thought to be on about eight times earnings, a figure Simon Willis of Charterhouse Tilney reckons to be "fairly low". The demerger will lead to increased transparency at BAT, which, according to Trevor Moss at Flemings, should "highlight the undervaluation of the tobacco business".

Second, the City reckons the deal will yield commercial synergies. Zurich will be able to retain its food management products through Farmers, BAT's insurance subsidiary in America, which has a 14,000-strong sales force. Reinsurance is another area of overlap. "Eagle Star Re and Zurich Re combine well," said Mr Moss.

Speculation also focused on whether US tobacco litigation was behind BAT's decision to split its businesses. It has been suggested that if BAT has to pay damages, profits from its financial services division could be at risk under the company's current structure. Most analysts though, doubt this is a driving force behind the deal. BAT channels its US tobacco business through subsidiary Brown & Williamson.

Confirmation of BAT's plans and news that Generali, the Italian insurer, had bid for AGF, the French insurer, buoyed shares in the insurance sector. Generali Accident and Commercial Union were viewed in the City yesterday as the two most likely candidates to forge deals.



The listening commissioner: Karel Van Miert should wave through the Guinness deal. He will also vet the other three mergers. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Harrisons in talks to sell building merchants business

Harrisons & Crosfield, the beleaguered building and animal feed conglomerate in the throes of a restructuring programme, admitted yesterday it was in discussions to sell its building merchants business to the rival Meyer group. Andrew Yates finds the deal could raise much-needed funds for the ailing group.

Meyer International, the timber importer and builders merchants, is holding talks with Harrisons & Crosfield about buying its building merchants business for more than £300m. A deal would bring together the Jewson and Harcros chains and create the biggest building merchants business in the UK.

Bill Turcan, chief executive of Harrisons & Crosfield, said: "We are in talks with Meyer but I cannot say anything further at the moment. Our strategic review is on target to be completed by the end of October.

Our new chairman and I are looking at a range of options and we will announce our decision very shortly."

Jonathan Fry, former head of Burmah Castrol, joined Harrisons as chairman to oversee the restructuring of the group.

However Mr Turcan refused to comment further on the outcome of the strategic review or whether the sale of Harcros could be the first of a string of disposals. It is also unclear whether Harrisons is holding exclusive talks with Meyer.

Some observers believe rival builders merchants could also be interested in Harcros.

Analysts reckon the disposal proceeds could pave the way for a special dividend payout. One analyst said: "Harrisons & Crosfield has been a poor performer. It is about time they started to do something about it and give something back to shareholders."

Under fire from institutional shareholders after a dire share price run, Harrisons has launched a strategic review of its business empire. Most analysts believe the group will be broken up, achieved through trade sales or floatations of busi-

nesses. The group is also rumoured to be close to selling BOCM Pauls, its animal feed business, for around £85m to George Paul, the group's former chairman.

A deal with Meyer would see Jewson's 211 outlets merged with Harcros' 200 stores. Meyer would then control around one-fifth of the UK building materials market.

Meyer said the deal would be earnings enhancing in the first full year. It is thought to be looking to finance the deal via a rights issue.

Harrisons recently announced a slump in profits from £64m in £38m for the six months to June. However Harcros improved operating profits to £9.7m from £5m.

Separately Harrisons announced it was selling Moore's Lumber and Building Supplies, its US builders merchant, for \$63m (£39m) to MLBS, a venture capital-backed takeover vehicle. The group has made a loss of \$62m (£38m) on the deal.

Harrisons has been hit by intense competition in the US and has been forced to withdraw from the market.

Virgin Direct set to launch banking subsidiary

Virgin Direct, the financial services arm of Richard Branson's airline to cola empire, is set to launch a banking subsidiary, offering a range of savings and loan products to consumers.

As Nick Gattin explains, Virgin's entry into the market marks a new stage in savers' drift away from traditional high street banking institutions.

The announcement of Virgin's move into banking, expected later this week, is thought to

involve links with Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), which recently unveiled its own £600m takeover plans for Birmingham Midshires Building Society.

The deal is understood to be backed by AMP, the Australia insurance giant which is also a big investor in Virgin Direct and is said to be prepared to pump hundreds of millions more into the joint venture.

Virgin refused to comment yesterday on the deal, which comes barely two and a half years after Virgin's entry into the financial services market. Earlier this year, Virgin announced that it had more than £1bn in funds under management, having won hundreds of thousands of customers to its low-cost PEPs and personal pensions.

In recent months, Virgin has also launched a range of critical illness and term assurance products. Analysts have long argued the next logical step for Virgin lay in more traditional savings and mortgage accounts, where the company could compete effectively.

Other trailblazers in recent years have included Direct Line, which now offers both savings and mortgage products and basic life assurance as well as motor and home insurance, and Sainsbury and Tesco.

Many observers predict a big slice of the market will be captured by these outsiders, who are able to offer competitive products by doing without expensive branch-based distribution networks.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
British Mining (F)	2.02m (1.51m)	180,000 (75,000)	0.08p (0.72p)	
Deep-Sea Leisure (F)	1.83m (1.45m)	436,000 (372,000)	7.0p (9.1p)	
Fitzwilliams (F)	£115.35m (£117.47m)	£94.27m (£61.05m)	1.22p (1.37p)	1.15p (1.08p)
London & Asso Prep (F)	- (-)	855,000 (821,000)	1.07p (0.95p)	nil (0.2p)
Premier Farnell (F)	375.8m (442.2m)	73.2m (56.1m)	13.6p (13.8p)	5.7p (5.2p)
South Beach Cafe (F)	253,000 (-)	-508,000 (-)	-0.57p (-)	
Toy House (F)	131.53m (110.01m)	7.9m (1.12m)	18.1p (2.5p)	7.5p (7.0p)
(F) - Final (F) - Interim				

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMAD

Redland is worth more

Premier Farnell's chief executive, says the first phase of the integration has been completed, the group faces a number of difficulties. The strength of the pound, which knocked £1.7bn off interim profits, will hit the group, which has £5m off interim profits, will be £2m off the second-half figure. Second, the UPS strike in America will knock £1m off the second-half and, perhaps most discouraging of all, the all-important US market seems to be growing rather slowly.

Other trailblazers in recent years have included Direct Line, which now offers both savings and mortgage products and basic life assurance as well as motor and home insurance, and Sainsbury and Tesco.

Many observers predict a big slice of the market will be captured by these outsiders, who are able to offer competitive products by doing without expensive branch-based distribution networks.

Though it can blame some rotten luck – like the economic slump in Germany, half of Redland's business – management cock-ups are the real problem. Five years after paying £1bn for French group Steetley the company is still trying to sell it off and admits it is vastly overpaid.

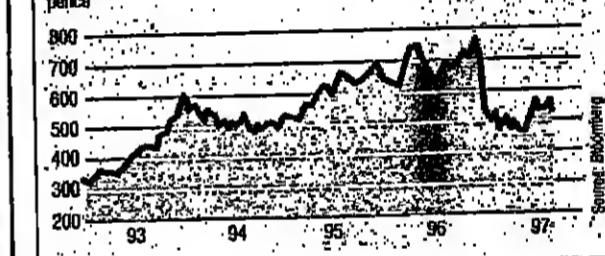
So how can Redland justify defending itself against an all-cash bid at such a huge premium? Particularly as there is no obvious second bidder for the whole company. While players like Hanson, Tarmac, RMC and South Africa's Minerva would salivate over Redland's aggregates business, this is just 30 per cent of the group.

With analysts downgrading full-year forecasts from £160m to £145m the shares trade on 20 times forward earnings. Lafarge wants the lot. Lafarge wants the lot. Redland has no chance of

Premier Farnell: At a glance

	1995	1996	1997	96/97	97/98
Trading record				Full year	Half year
Turnover (£m)	514.2	538.9	982.8	442.3	375.5
Pre-tax profits (£m)	59.1	110.8	173.0	76.1	73.2
Earnings per share (p)	27.3	54.6	36.5	13.6	13.6
Dividends per share (p)	8.55	10.25	12.0	5.2	5.2

Share price



surviving in its current form after this offer. The issue is whether Lafarge will win or just be a catalyst for a breakup of Redland. The market believes that at the very least, Lafarge will have to pay more. Redland's shares closed 79p up at 336.5p, 2 per cent above the offer price. Though Lafarge will probably pay more, this offer is already stretching pushing its gearing to around 100 per cent.

Redland's defence will be to propose some kind of break up plan, perhaps selling off its UK and US aggregates businesses piecemeal. That could well realize more value than Lafarge's offer. Arend-Dikkers at Salomon Brothers reckons the UK aggregates business alone, a tenth of group earnings, could fetch a fifth of Redland's total market value in a trade sale. That implies Redland is worth at least 350p a share. Shareholders should bang on.

Premier fails to impress

Premier Farnell, the electronics distributor, has hardly covered itself in glory since it paid £1.9bn for Premier early last year. It issued a messy half-yearly profit warning with a year, caused by a depressed US market and strong pound. The City has treated the company warily ever since.

Premier Farnell's shares, which sank from 75p before the warning in January to just 45p in April, have regained just a fraction of their lost ground.

Sadly, there was little to cheer about in yesterday's half-year results. The pre-tax figure of £73.2m was towards the bottom end of expectations and the cautious tone of the statement had analysts scurrying to downgrade their full-year numbers. The result was a 24.5p fall in the share price to 526.5p.

Though Howard Poulson,

South Beach rolls out

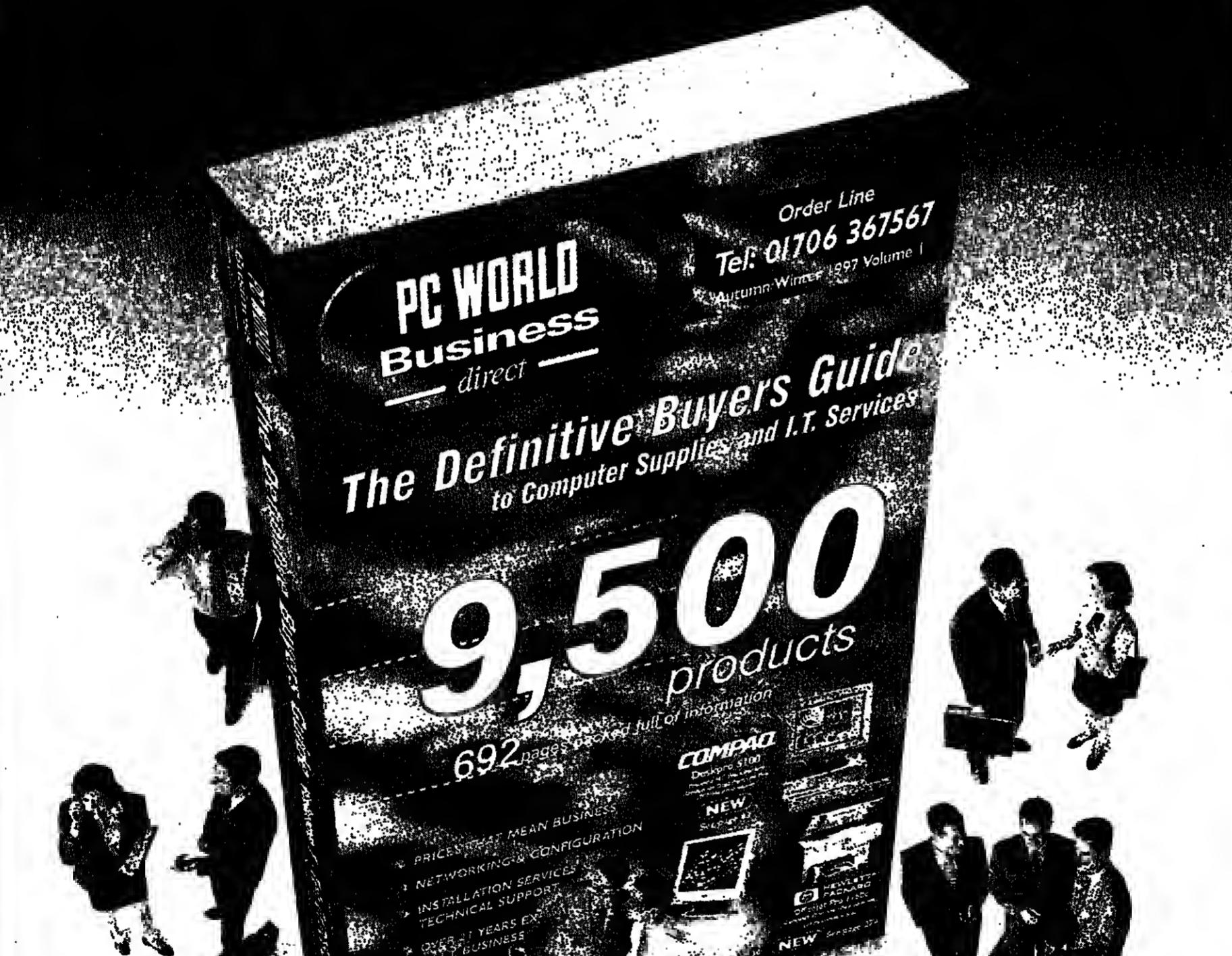
London is on a high. The economy is booming. City bonuses are rising to obscene levels again and it has been widely acclaimed as Europe's trendiest city. Bright new bars and restaurants are popping up everywhere. South Beach Cafe is the latest of a long line of companies hoping to cash in on the good times.

Though still a tiddler, the group plans to roll out its South Beach Cafes chain across the capital where customers can choose from a host of vegetable and fruit drinks as well as exotic coffees while nibbling on a bagel and tapping into the Internet. It is also looking to bring yet another pizza peddler to British shores. Pizza World will offer upmarket pizzas at downmarket prices. The group plans to have a string of outlets here by the end of next year.

Pre-tax losses escalated to £50.6m (£36.7m) for the six months to June. Chairman Thomas Burnham, one of a clutch of ex-Domino Pizza executives who dreamt up South Beach's concept, points out that costs have risen sharply as the group spends heavily establishing its franchising business. His argument goes that once franchisees come aboard earnings will rise sharply and the group should break into the black next year.

The shares have been beached since joining the market from Oxfex in May, falling from 6.25p to 3.75p. If either of the new eateries take off in could be sailing pretty. The problem is fierce competition. Sky-high property prices mean more restaurant ventures fail, succeeded. The shares unchanged, yesterday, are a punt for the brave, but don't risk your life savings.

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OUTLOOK ON THE SPATE OF TAKEOVERS, BERNARD ARNAULT AND NICHE PUBLISHERS

Whatever the collective term is for a group of Euro-takeovers (a concordat of the blighters, perhaps), we certainly had a bally full yesterday. What with Bernard Arnault settling for blood money and dropping his objections to the Guinness/Grand Met merger, BAT Industries' decision to sell (effectively) its huge insurance interests to Zurich, the Lafarge bid for Redland, and the Reed Elsevier merger with Wolters Kluwer, we seem to have entered a new phase of merger mania – and one with a European dimension, what is more.

It is silly, perhaps, to generalise too much on the basis of four very different takeovers, each with their own special set of motives, but there are obviously some themes here. The first is the growing realisation among investment bankers that, with the narrower domestic market for consolidating mergers all but closed off by a hostile Labour government, it is important to go for a deal with a genuine European dimension to it, one that escapes consideration by domestic competition authorities and is instead examined by the more user-friendly and predictable officials of the European Commission in Brussels.

In itself, this seems to be forcing British industry away from domestic mergers and into cross-border ones. Add in the growing pressures of the single European market and the approach of monetary union, and it is obvious why companies are going this route. It may not be possible to buy market share in your own country any longer, but you can con-

solidate within the single market without too much interference.

For instance, it will undoubtedly be easier for BAT Industries to get the merger of Eagle Star and Allied Dunbar with Zurich cleared by Brussels than it would have been to persuade Mrs Block (Margaret Beckett) to allow a similar merger in Britain with Commercial Union (which was the plan at BAT Industries last year).

The same goes for Grand Met and Guinness. The European Commission is about to clear this marriage with only modest conditions attached. Had it been Mrs Beckett's call, she would almost certainly have packed it off to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The second theme is an old one – pressure across all industries for consolidation and focus as markets become more international and global in nature. BAT's announcement encapsulates both pressures, demerger to allow the tobacco and insurance interests to roam free and merger to give the insurance interests a powerful new voice in Europe and beyond. The scope for cost cutting in the tie up with Zurich might not be as great as with some of the alternatives, but there do seem to be genuine synergies between the two and in so far as it is possible to judge these things on the limited amount of information available, BAT shareholders are ending up with the better half of the deal.

Finally, there is the way in which the perceived scope for cost cutting, rationalisation and consolidation in industry and commerce is driving up equity values, both here in Europe and in the US. Yesterday's 7.8 point rise in the FTSE 100 index was almost entirely down to the three big FTSE stocks directly involved in the latest outbreak of merger mania and the realisation that other big companies must now respond. We can expect a lot more of this sort of thing as the single currency approaches. Whether this is enough in itself to sustain stock prices at present buoyant levels is a rather more difficult question to answer.

tending present distribution agreements between Guinness and Mr Arnault to the merged group will bring in extra cost savings not originally identified – equal to about £25m a year year by Guinness's estimation. There is some commercial benefit.

Even so it is hard to see what else has been achieved other than bringing a generally fractious shareholder on side.

Furthermore, the £25m doesn't succeed in getting rid of the Arnault problem for good. He continues as a director of the merged group and his powerful pre-emption clauses in the joint distribution arrangements remain untouched. GMB Branda could easily find itself replaying this episode a few years down the line.

If no significant cost cuts, why do it?

The intention is to build up dominant content and then push it through a variety of formats such as print, CD-Roms and the Lexis-Nexis database. Judging by Reed's share price yesterday – up 18 per cent – the City generally buys the idea of a powerful combination increasingly able to put the squeeze on smaller rivals. Analysts are also impressed by the willingness of Wolters Kluwer to take on Reed so soon after the recent circulation-overstatement fiasco at Reed's travel subsidiary.

Business and professional information is a market that is rapidly consolidating – witness the recent Maid deal with Knight-Ridder. Reed's surprise move has increased the pressure on other players, so more deals seem inevitable. It may also force the long-expected sale by Reed of its IPC consumer magazines division. However, with analysts saying Reed would need to raise £1bn from the sale just to achieve earnings neutrality, perhaps we should not be holding our breath.

الآن من الأصل

Merger mania with an added European twist

Holland will make the enlarged group an even more dominant force.

For once it seems true that here is a deal that is genuinely not about cost-cutting. The tongue-twistingly named Elsevier Wolters Kluwer says the merger will yield £250m of savings a year after year three – which is just over 1 per cent of the combined group's cost base. That's not much. The enlarged group keeps headquarters in both Britain and Holland and just about everyone keeps their jobs in this one – in the boardroom at any rate.

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RJB leads coal delegation to Downing St

Britain's coal industry, led by the biggest producer RJB Mining, has told the Government it should be allowed to take over and operate coal-fired power stations that are under threat of closure.

Michael Harrison reports on the latest attempts to provide a lifeline for the country's coalfields.

The Government was warned yesterday that eight pits and up to 4,000 jobs could disappear unless it acted to support the coal industry. A delegation to Downing Street, led by RJB's chief executive Richard Budge, urged officials to impose a temporary ban on approvals for further gas-fired stations and provide financial support for a new generation of environmentally friendly clean coal power stations.

However, the industry is also drawing up plans to save redundant coal-fired generating capacity from being moth-

balled and dismantled. Industry executives believe that before being allowed to close coal-fired stations, the three big fossil fuel generators should be required to offer it to other parties.

"If there is coal burning capacity that is coming off the system that has useful life, then it makes sense to offer it to someone else to operate. It would also help stimulate competition," said one executive.

Later, Mr Budge said the 90-minute meeting with Geoff Norris, who advises the Prime Minister on energy, as "useful" but refused to be drawn further.

A fortnight ago PowerGen announced the closure of a

400MW unit at Ferrybridge C power station in Yorkshire, reducing the market for coal by a further 1 million tonnes a year.

The delegation from the Confederation of UK Coal Producers told Downing Street that a fundamental review was now needed of the UK electricity generating market, arguing that it was increasingly biased against coal.

While the review is being conducted, it wants a moratorium on any further consents for gas-fired stations.

The incoming Labour government angered the coal industry in August when it gave

the go-ahead for a 1,200MW gas-fired station at BP Chemicals' Salt End works near Hull.

Kevin Barron, the Labour MP for Rother Valley, attacked the decision yesterday. "It's sad about the recent permission to build a gas-fired power station – we said we weren't going to do that," he told Radio 4's *Today* programme.

"What we need to do in this country is to have an energy policy that is sustainable, that is diverse and is secure. Deep mine coal is an essential part of that, and I think everybody understands that."

City investors predict UK will join euro early

A new survey of fund managers revealed that three-quarters of them reckon Britain will join the single currency before 2002. This suggests the financial markets have already started making the adjustments necessary for UK membership, says Diane Coyle, Economics Editor.

Only one in 10 of the UK-based investors covered by Merrill Lynch's regular survey said they believe Britain will never join the European single currency. Fully 76 per cent think the UK will be in from 2001 or 2002, before the end of the current Parliament.

This surprising degree of consensus has emerged after a leak of the Government's intention to take a more positive approach towards membership of Europe's economic and monetary union. This lopped several pennies off the pound's exchange rate against the German mark at the end of last month and took gilt yields much closer to low German yields.

Bijal Shah, global strategist at Merrill Lynch, said: "Given that the vast majority of managers expect the UK to join EMU, much of the convergence yields between UK gilts and German bunds may already have occurred."

The pound climbed a little on the foreign exchanges yesterday because of disappointing figures on producer prices. Even so, it ended at DM2.84,

still well below its level of DM2.87 two weeks ago.

The latest official figures for prices paid by manufacturers for their raw materials, and charged at the factory gate, were described as "disappointing" by City analysts.

Input prices increased 0.5 per cent last month, and the year-on-year rate at which they are falling was 7.8 per cent compared with 8.3 per cent in August. Output prices rose 0.2 per cent in September, to a level only 1/4 per cent higher than a year earlier. Underlying prices, excluding energy, food, drink and tobacco, rose 0.1 per cent in the month and 0.8 per cent year on year.

This showed inflation at the start of the chain to be tame but not quite as subdued as expected. In particular, food prices are showing signs of an inflationary pick-up.

But with manufacturing lagging behind the rest of the economy, prices charged for services and wages present a greater cause for concern. "The unemployment and earnings data due this week will be much more important for the path of base rates," said Adam Cole of James Capel.

A survey of high street sales by the British Retail Consortium showed a sharp dip in sales growth last month. The BRC said the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales had reduced sales by an estimated £230m, but it said spending had begun to slow even allowing for this. On a "like-for-like" basis, adjusted sales were up at an annual rate of 3.4 per cent compared with 3.9 per cent in August.

Reports confirm north-south divide grows even wider

The north-south divide, bugbear of the British business cycle, has reopened, according to two new reports. House prices in Greater London have risen two times faster than the national average, according to the latest regional breakdown from Halifax. In the third quarter of this year they rose by 1.8 per cent in the capital compared to a national average increase of 0.9 per cent and a decline of 0.7 per cent in Northern Ireland.

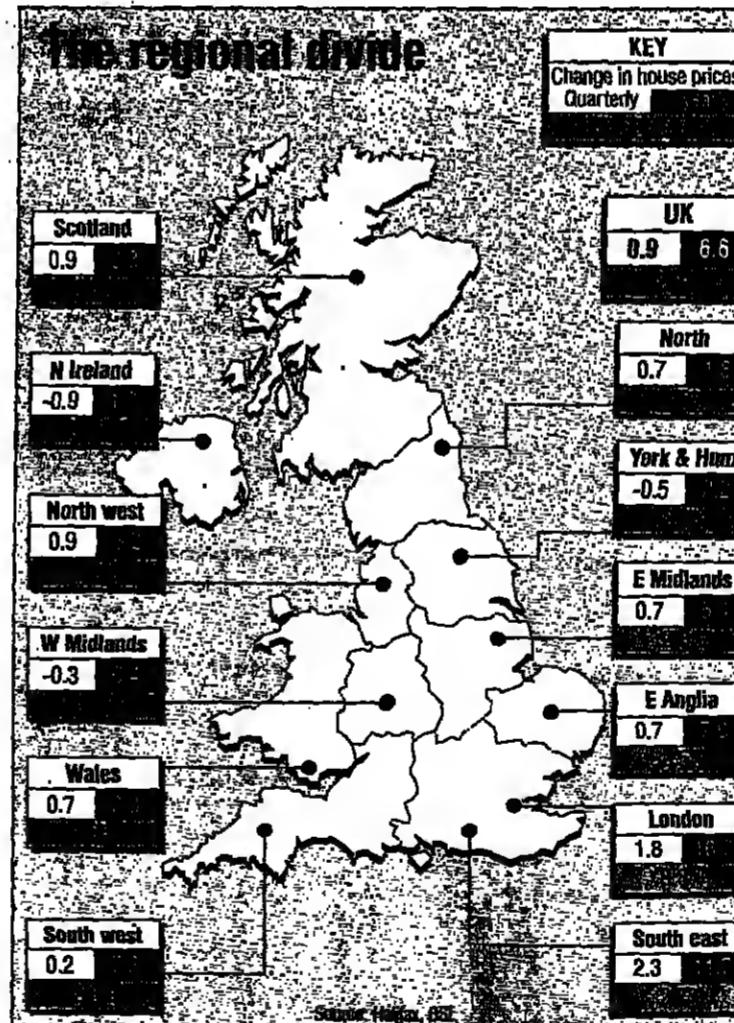
House price booms normally rippled out slowly from London through the South-east and on to the rest of the country and in July Halifax reported that this pattern had begun to emerge.

However, in its commentary yesterday, it said: "The latest figures show little evidence that the so-called 'rippe effect' is gaining momentum."

As a result the gap between northern and southern price gaps wide. The average semi in a pleasant London suburb such as Ealing costs £186,250, according to Halifax's figures, while a similar property in Harrogate would cost only £70,450. The national average price of a semi is £65,898.

A separate report yesterday focused on the uneven regional spread of the economic recovery. Business Strategies Ltd (BSL) said the combination of booming consumer spending with limping growth in manufacturing meant that "the old north-south divide is opening up again".

Neil Blake, a director of the consultancy, said London, the South-east and the South-west, along with



parts of the east Midlands, were prospering because of their greater exposure to consumer spending and private sector service businesses.

The report predicts private services will grow by 6.4 per cent this year, compared to a meagre 1.7 per cent expansion in manufacturing.

BSL is predicting the boom will be short-lived, with growth slowing to 2 per cent next year from a likely 3.4 per cent this year. However, the report puts average economic growth at 2.7 per cent between 1993 and 2000, compared with 2.2 per cent between 1982 and 1993.

– Diane Coyle

Waterstone to set proposals before WH Smith today

WH Smith will finally meet Tim Waterstone today to discuss his audacious restructuring plans for the high street书商.

But as Nigel Cope, City Correspondent reports, his revised set of proposals may still receive a frosty reception.

Both sides declined to comment on the planned meeting yesterday but it is understood that Jeremy Hardie, WH Smith's chairman, and Richard Handover, its new chief executive, will meet Mr Waterstone today in an attempt to assess if his proposals have any merit for shareholders.

Ian Martin, the Unigate chairman who is being proposed by Mr Waterstone as deputy chairman of the re-

vised group, will also attend the meeting.

The decision to get together represents a major climbdown for Mr Waterstone's original proposals outright. The change of heart follows a week-long series of meetings between Mr Waterstone and key WH Smith's institutional investors who are unhappy at both the company's woeful share price performance and, some say, the cavalier

approach of the Smith board. Mr Waterstone will present a revised set of proposals to Mr Hardie and Mr Handover at the meeting. Instead of the original 20p per share payout, which would have been funded by almost £600m of new debt, Mr Waterstone will propose a distribution of between 125p and 150p. Shareholders will also receive shares in a new company with around £400m of debt.

The new proposals, under

which Mr Waterstone would install himself as chief executive, also see a fair lower valuation attached to Daisy & Tom, Mr Waterstone's children's operation which has a single shop on London's Kings Road.

Instead of the £55m valuation in the original proposals, the deal will suggest a £25m valuation – the same sum as invested by Mr Waterstone and backers.

Additional payments would be made on an earn-out basis.

WH Smith is still reeling from earlier revelations that its non-executives had not been present when it was decided to reject Mr Waterstone's bid.

Though reports suggested Mr Handover had said the board was unanimous it is understood that Michael Orr was in Australia, Patrick Lupo was in Brussels and Marjorie Scardino was giving briefings on Pearson. Martin Taylor did not attend either.

Scandinavian banks merge

Merita, Finland's largest bank, will merge with Nordbanken, the third-largest bank in Sweden, it was announced yesterday. The new bank will be worth around \$10.6bn (£6.3bn).

Outbreak of merger mania sends Footsie racing higher

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN
STOCK
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OF THE YEAR

It was more action packed than even the more rumbustious takeover days of the 1980s. Suddenly four major deals, worth a staggering £6bn, hit the stock market in quick succession, inevitably provoking speculation about future corporate activity.

Shares of the principal players romped ahead. BAT Industries, hoping to merge its financial operations with Zurich of Switzerland, rose 58p to 609p and Reed International, on the proposed merger of Reed Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer, reacted with a 97p jump to 629p.

With LVMH bowing to the Grand Metropolitan and Guinness merger the two drinks groups were in celebratory mood with GrandMet up 21p at 604p and Guinness 28.5p to 605.5p.

Redland, the hard pressed

building materials group, added 79p to 336.5p as Lafarge, the French group, bid £1.7bn, or 320p a share.

Heavy trading in Redland, which quickly rejected the offer, indicated the French picked up stock.

The possible spin-offs from the deals added to the intense excitement of merger Monday.

Shorn of its financial operations BAT could seek to develop its tobacco side.

Gallaher, floated in May, is the market's favoured target and the shares rose 34p to a 329p peak.

Imperial Tobacco was also caught in the smoke signals, swirling 20.5p higher to 391.5p.

The BAIs adventure also drew attention to insurance shares. The market is appreciative of the existing strains and stresses which could prompt more corporation ac-

tion and was quick to hoist such shares as Prudential Corporation, up 29.5p to 698p, and GRE, 17p to 342p.

On the drinks front Alfred Domesec was a beneficiary of the sudden LVMH compliance. The suspicion the GrandMet/Guinness alliance will force it into a defensive merger - Seagram of Canada or Pernod Ricard of France? - boosted the shares 12.5p to 509p, highest since last year.

The market was so beset

by the sudden outbreak of merger mania that even a deal which was put on hold drew applause. Kingfisher's decision to defer plans to take control of BUT, the French chain, by buying a further 30 per cent prompted a 25p gain to 857.5p. The Woolworths group already has 26 per cent of the electrical retailer.

The sheer deluge of corporate activity sent Footsie racing 72.8 points higher to 5,300.1 and the two main supporting indices moved to new peaks.

Friday's two modest bids

prompted further activity as the Far Eastern Jardine Motors scooped up 8.78 per cent of its intended victim, Appleyards, at 78p a share; Peck, the traffic control group, signalled a 36.5p gain to 78.5p follow-

ing the after-hours £98m (80p)

offer from the US, Thermo

Power, which moved into the

market to lift its stake to 9.64

per cent.

British Aerospace, which said overseas investors had reached 28.7 per cent of its capital, and Rolls-Royce were higher on talk the Government is on the verge of lifting the ceiling on foreign shareholdings from 25 per cent to 49.5 per cent. Rolls, up 7.5p to 236p, greets Scandinavian investors on Thursday under the auspices of Henderson Crosthwaite. BAe was 27p harder at 1,726.5p.

Imperial Chemical Industries was a significant absentee from the sea of blue. It shaded 4p to 962p as worries persisted about its third-quarter results. BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster, was another subdued blue chip, softening

2p to 445.5p as Merrill Lynch downgraded its stance to neutral.

Halifax had the dubious distinction of being the worst performing blue chip, falling 11.5p to 730.5p in brisk trading.

TradePoint, the stock market in miniature, continued to benefit from next week's switch to order-driven trading, gaining 12p to 148.5p. Flare, an engineer, firmed to 118p despite the departure of chairman Ian Gowrie-Smith, his family's 8 per cent interest was placed with institutions at 116p.

Dawn 'Til Dusk, a chain of convenience stores, fell 15p to 242.5p after admitting getting a decimal point in the wrong place. On Friday the company said like-for-like sales were up 31.5 per cent. Yesterday the advance was corrected to 3.15 per cent.

TAKING STOCK

Speculation Prestbury Leisure is set to become a vehicle for Nigel Wray and Nick Leslau strengthened as the shares were suspended after a 5.5p gain to 9.25p. The company said it was in talks which could lead to an acquisition. There had been expectations Prestbury would buy a football club but such a deal now seems unlikely.

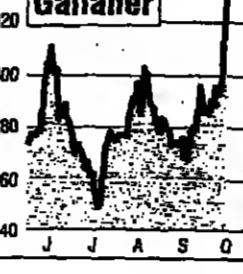
Carbo, the engineer reshaped under Ken Jackson, has duly sold its foundry for just over £2m. Since the revamping exercise started three years ago businesses worth around £26m have been sold. At 29p Carbo is valued at £22.9m.

Label group Jarvis Porter added 8p to 230.5p as takeover hopes resurfaced. Britain, in receipt of a US bid, has indicated the hidden value in packaging. Jarvis was 310p last year.

Share Spotlight

share price, pence

340



Source: Bloomberg

240 300 320

J J A S 0

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is based on latest available earnings per share.

Dividend per share is the latest per share, excluding extraordinary items but including exceptional.

Other details: Ex-right: A ex-right; S suspended; P paid; D dividend; N nil yield; *AMP; GIC prices are Bloomberg's. Source: Bloomberg

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FTSE 100 Index hour by hour

Open 327.3 11:00 529.2 Up 63.9 5:00 525.4 Up 6.61

9:00 328.4 Up 55.1 12:00 526.5 Up 6.92 12:00 529.7 Up 7.04

10:00 330.6 Up 73.3 13:00 528.6 Up 7.13 Close 530.1 Up 7.28

Seq volume: 655.8m trades 55.28

Gifts index no

Market Leaders: Top 20 volumes

at 200pm

Stock Vol Stock Vol Stock Vol

We must learn how to live in a world of low inflation



**HAMISH
MCRAE
ON THE
GLOBAL
ECONOMY OF
NEXT CENTURY**

A new week and – after the dismay of the past few days – a new burst of enthusiasm on the markets. For the moment at least all that concern seems to have evaporated; all those parallels with October 1987 or even 1929 seem to have been brushed aside.

But the concern itself is interesting: this natural desire to seek patterns of the past which might give a guide to the future. This is perhaps the dominant feature of financial analysis at the moment. On the one hand, people do believe the future is going to be different from the immediate past; hence all this justification for the continued share price boom. But to get a feel for the possible financial conditions which will dominate the first years of the next century we tend to look backward, not forward.

There is one question – is this cycle like all the others? – which has been widely discussed. There is another, which is only just starting to come up on the radar – in what ways will the world economy and financial markets be different in the next 50 years from everything that we've experienced in the past 50? Here are five thoughts on this second question. . .

Thought one is that demographic change alone will have an enormous impact on financial markets. We will have to see a shift away from state pensions to private ones: pensions being paid by people's own savings, rather than taxation or the dwindling proportion of people of working age. So there will be a big surplus of personal savings over the next 20 years, which will then be run down as the savers draw their pensions. This surplus of savings, at least in the developed countries, will mean that for a couple of decades there will be a lot of money swishing around. This suggests that real rates of return on capital will tend to fall but that capital values of assets will be underpinned.

This we can see. What we've hardly begun to think about, except perhaps in Japan, is the danger of overshooting and experiencing a long period of falling prices. In theory this is fine. All people – children, co-workers, the retired – would benefit from falling prices rather than workers benefiting from rising wages. The whole of society would thus share the results of productivity gains rather than people who happen to be in the right jobs. But adjusting the stable prices is tough on people who have only known inflation and tough on policy-makers who won't know how to cope. Expect those to make mistakes.

Expect, too, lower nominal returns on cash. Getting used to a world where interest rates are 3 to 5 per cent is tough for people used to returns of double that. Getting used to the idea that growth and falling prices can together will be harder still.

Thought four carries on from here. The first years of the next century are going to be a period of big adjustment. The great engine of productivity will keep on generating gains. We will go on thinking of ways of producing better goods more cheaply and better and cheaper services. But these gains will not mean much higher living standards. Instead the benefits will be siphoned off into the costs of coping with the ageing population. The smaller workforce will see less of a return for itself. Meanwhile, savers will become more concerned with preserving the real value of their savings, rather than trying to achieve the double-digit gains of the past 20 years. If you ever known . . .

want higher returns, you'll have to go abroad, which will mean accepting higher risks.

So risk will be different, and this is thought number five. Instead of there being large inflation risks, there will be deflation risks. Instead of there being large swings of interest rates, there will be smaller movements, but in a world of stable prices, smaller movements will have larger effects. Currency risk will change, with major currencies having a more stable relationship, though not as stable as the Bretton Woods exchange rate system of the immediate post-war years. That does not mean that a single European currency will find it easier to survive, particularly if it becomes associated with slow growth of living standards. But it does mean that it will have a more stable relationship with the dollar and other currencies.

Company risk will change, too. The idea that earnings of most large companies will relatively increase year after year will have to go. A larger proportion will be unable to produce improved results each year. For higher returns, people will have to go to smaller companies and to start-ups, accepting more risks. There will be greater rewards for spotting new, growing firms and fewer rewards for over-analysing large, old ones.

Of course these five propositions will in some measure be wrong. What will almost certainly be right is that the early years of the next century will be very different from anything which people aged under, say, 70 will have experienced in their lifetime. It's so hard to see turning points when you're on the cusp. We may or may not be in a cyclical turning point in the markets, but it does look as though we're between two big secular trends, the inflation world of the post-Second World War period, and something else.

Thought three is that the trend towards lower inflation is now secure and the next century, like the last one, may be

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

**JOHN
WILLCOCK**



It must be a bit galling to finally get the top job after years of sweat, knowing that it will last for only six months. Chris Woodburn is replacing Richard Farrant as chief executive of the Securities and Futures Authority (SFA), the City's main regulator, but only until Labour's embryonic super-watchdog, NewRO, takes over next April.

Mr Woodburn will oversee the SFA's handover of authority to NewRO. After that he will be responsible for winding up what is left of the SFA until it disappears in a puff of smoke under legislation due to be passed late in 1999.

None of which will bother Mr Woodburn, who helped create the SFA's predecessor, The Securities Association (TSA). TSA was set up under the Financial Services Act 1986 and was then merged with the Association of Futures Brokers and Dealers in 1991 to form the SFA. It seems that, as far as the UK's regulators are concerned, perpetual revolution is the order of the day.

Mr Woodburn trained as an accountant with Deloitte & Co, now part of Coopers & Lybrand, and has cut his teeth as a regulator with the London Stock Exchange, which he joined in 1974. In those days people in the City were largely left to get on with it and regulation was a cottage industry.

But the important question is – who got Mr Farrant's airy and comfortable offices with their views looking north over the Thames towards St Pauls Cathedral? I bear a number of SFA insiders have their eyes on it, so Mr Woodburn had better get his skates on if he wants to stake his claim.

Congratulations to Sinead Pincombe, once author of this column's forerunner,



Who will get Richard Farrant's old offices with their superb views?

Column Eight, who has left the press office of UBS to join arch rival investment bank Deutsche Morgan Grenfell.

Simon refused to be drawn on just how much wedge he will be trousering as DMG's head of corporate communications, but jealous City sources are whispering that his package is "well north of hundred grand". Indeed, some City dealers were overheard yesterday making deals in "Pincombes".

The departure of the electric guitar-playing former journalist and alpine ski legend, coming as it does so soon after that of Lisa Spira, former long-time head of communications at UBS in London, has prompted City gossip-mongers to speculate whether more far-reaching changes are afoot at the Swiss bank. With half of BZW being put up for sale, anything can happen in these days of investment banking consolidation.

Whatever, Simon says he is looking forward to working alongside Markus Will, overall boss of press relations at DMG. There's just one problem: "I'm now on five weeks' gardening leave. The only problem is I haven't got a garden."

Biotechnology analysts are moving around almost as much as biotech share prices these days. Edring Refsum, one of the most vigorous bulls of the sector, is leaving Yamaichi to join Nomura. He re-

places Nick Woolf, who left Nomura to join US investment house Robertson Stephens as adviser on UK biotech companies. Mr Refsum, who was one of the biggest fans of Biocompatic, the ill-fated coatings group whose shares fell from over £14 to under £5 in a few weeks when it failed to settle a key deal, is thought to be taking gardening leave. (The UK's gardens will soon be in perfect condition at this rate.) Perhaps he is waiting for share prices in the depressed sector to blossom before he starts talking up his favourite stocks.

Roger Looker will resign as chairman of RPS Group, the Abingdon, Oxfordshire-based environmental consultancy, on 23 October, in order to concentrate on his pub and restaurant interests. Dr Alan Hearne, chief executive of the company, said: "Roger concluded he had contributed everything he could to the business and now was the time to let someone else have a go." Mr Looker will be succeeded by Brook Land, a former partner of City law firm Nabarro Nathansoo.

David Went is to succeed Irish Life's managing director, David Kingsley, when he retires next year. Mr Went is chief executive of Coutts Group, the international private banking arm of National Westminster Bank.

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling	Spot	1 month	3 month	Dollar	Spot	1 month	3 month	D-Mark
UK	10000	1.6889	1.6883	1.6876	0.6761	0.6760	0.6755	0.6750	1.3220
Australia	2.8111	2.8188	2.8263	2.8305	1.3500	1.3536	1.3576	1.3573	1.2318
Austria	10.9957	10.9963	10.9970	10.9973	1.2321	1.2314	1.2314	1.2314	1.2088
Belgium	58.6356	58.6468	58.6500	58.6527	3.6073	3.6073	3.6085	3.6085	3.5965
Canada	2.2947	2.2950	2.2952	2.2954	1.2249	1.2249	1.2251	1.2251	1.2054
Denmark	10.5181	10.5185	10.5188	10.5191	1.1278	1.1275	1.1278	1.1278	1.0854
ECU	14.4892	14.4895	14.4898	14.4901	1.2027	1.2024	1.2024	1.2024	1.1883
Finland	8.8470	8.8473	8.8476	8.8479	1.2220	1.2217	1.2217	1.2217	1.1995
France	8.8521	8.8524	8.8527	8.8530	1.2214	1.2211	1.2211	1.2211	1.1985
Germany	28.2493	28.2514	28.2517	28.2519	1.7514	1.7511	1.7511	1.7511	1.7469
Greece	44.7344	44.7349	44.7352	44.7355	2.7657	2.7657	2.7657	2.7657	2.7448
Hong Kong	12.5562	12.5571	12.5573	12.5575	7.7343	7.7343	7.7345	7.7345	7.7148
Iceland	1.1571	1.1573	1.1575	1.1577	1.2253	1.2253	1.2255	1.2255	1.2157
Italy	27.8508	27.8512	27.8515	27.8518	1.7793	1.7792	1.7795	1.7795	1.7657
Japan	15.5593	15.5611	15.5614	15.5617	1.2076	1.2073	1.2074	1.2074	1.1985
Malaysia	5.0105	5.0108	5.0111	5.0114	3.3464	3.3464	3.3465	3.3465	3.3363
Mexico	1.2510	1.2512	1.2514	1.2516	1.2250	1.2250	1.2251	1.2251	1.2149
Netherlands	3.2005	3.2008	3.2011	3.2014	1.7711	1.7707	1.7707	1.7707	1.7595
New Zealand	2.5105	2.5108	2.5111	2.5114	1.9678	1.9675	1.9678	1.9678	1.9563
Norway	11.3711	11.3715	11.3718	11.3721	1.2250	1.2247	1.2250	1.2250	1.2149
Portugal	2.6511	2.6513	2.6515	2.6517	1.7703	1.7700	1.7703	1.7703	1.7595
Saudi Arabia	6.0872	6.0875	6.0878	6.0881	3.7505	3.7502	3.7505	3.7505	3.7347
Singapore	2.4987	2.4992	2.4995	2.4998	1.5385	1.5382	1.5385	1.5385	1.5275
South Africa	7.5749	7.5752	7.5755	7.5758	4.4770	4.4767	4.4770	4.4770	4.4662
Spain	2.5749	2.5752	2.5755	2.5758	1.7750	1.7747	1.7750	1.7750	1.7645
Sweden	12.2777	12.2780	12.2783	12.2786	1.7542	1.7539	1.7542	1.7542	1.7437
Switzerland	2.5723	2.5726	2.5729	2.5732	1.7542	1.7539	1.7542	1.7542	1.7437
US	10.5231	10.5234	10.5237	10.5240	1.7514	1.7511	1.7514	1.7514	1.7405

Interest Rates

Country	3 mth	clg	1 yr	chg	2 yr	clg	5 yr	clg	10 yr	clg
Australia	4.85	0.00	4.97	0.03	5.28	0.04	5.66	0.05	6.46	0.04
Canada	5.2827	0.00	5.3027	0.00	5.35	0.00	5.45	0.00	5.55	0.00
China	12.45	0.00	12.55	0.00	12.65	0.00	12.75	0.00	12.85	0.00
Czech Rep	5.3277	0.00	5.3285	0.00	5.35	0.00	5.45	0.00	5.55	0.00
Denmark	5.0207	0.00	5.0207	0.00	5.05	0.00	5.15	0.00	5.25	0.00
Finland</										

Collins doing the business on the water

George Collins is the man who liked the Whitbread Round the World Race so much he spent \$5m on a yacht and a top-line crew.

Stuart Alexander talks to the American investment manager, who is beating the cream of ocean racing at their own game.

When the Whitbread fleet of ocean racers crosses Chesapeake Bay next April to finish the seventh leg in Baltimore, George Collins will, be says, "almost be able to reach over the guard rail and shake the hands of my friends as we race to the finishing line. As a matter of fact it goes right by my house."

Here is a man, a competitor and fan, who liked the idea of joining the world's best in the best round-the-world race so much that he bought himself a place on the start line, his city a major role as host and his favourite piece of water the starring role of being writ large on the side of his 64-foot yacht, Chessie Racing.

But this is not just the whim of a dilettante. To be the chief executive officer of a multi-million dollar company you have built up yourself needs a competitive streak. He insists that this is not just a game to take his mind off things now that he is semi-retired at the age of 57 from the investment management business he created. That be is not another example of the blazer brigade meddling in

sport because they have nothing else to do.

"I could have bought a minor league baseball team, but I couldn't play and would probably only have ended up interfering in the training," he said. "I'm not a spectator, I would rather be out there participating. But at my age there are very few games in which you can still participate and enjoy it."

Not that Collins has not had to modify his expectation about when he can play in the team, and when he can not. At the moment he is waiting to fly to Cape Town to welcome in his boat, skippered by Mark Fischer, at the end of the 7,350-mile first leg, but he will not be joining them for the second leg across the rough and testing southern ocean.

The delivery trip across the Atlantic Collins undertook aboard Chessie Racing taught him his limitations on what can be a bucking bronco of a beast when the wind whips up. On one 24-hour run they topped 400 exhilarating, but nerve and muscle-jangling miles.

"This is a non user-friendly, full-on racing machine. This type of boat is very difficult," he says. Instead of racing, Collins' contribution is cold, dispassionate management skills and a funding programme that ensured that every development worth doing was done and a top-line crew properly paid.

Collins has had to dig deeper into his pockets than he first thought. He put up the basic \$2m (£1.3m) to pay for the boat, expecting other sponsors would jump aboard clutching another \$3m. They did not, but "it's been a good stock market, so I



George Collins on board Chessie Racing: 'At my age there are very few games in which you can still participate and enjoy it' . Photograph: Peter Jay

have stepped up," Collins says.

That has meant no reasonable request being refused, staying calm when gear was breaking during the bedding-down period when he was "lapping up my dollars".

"This is serious stuff. It doesn't come more serious than this," Collins says, "and I don't want things to blow up when it counts. Then you are in deep trouble."

The planning was meticu-

lous, the training serious and his crew have been in the top five since the race started in Southampton on 21 September. Chessie Racing is ahead of the favourite Toshiba, skip-

pered by Chris Dickson, and

EF Language, was predicting 20 hours of uncertain winds as the back markers in the 10-boat fleet reduced the gap and Britain's Lawrie Smith tried, from fourth place, to outflank the problem.

This is not an amateur af-

fair, but there is, however, the inevitable vein of romance. The picture of a monster on the side of the yacht recalls how grandfather Wilson came from Glasgow as a baby, along with a bottle of water from Loch Ness which was poured into Chesapeake Bay. For Nessie

read Chessie.

Collins' boat was fifth yesterday, 173 miles behind the leader, EF Language, as light airs slowed the fleet on the final 2,500 miles to Cape Town.

Paul Cayard, the skipper of

Goss and Dinelli stand out among big boats

The stormy baptism for the Anglo-French pairing of Pete Goss and Raphael Dinelli, the man he rescued last Christmas, was looking good yesterday after the first 48 hours of the Jacques Vabre two-handed transatlantic race.

When Goss pushed his 50-footer BMW Performance into third place with Yves Parlier and Eric Tabary in Aquitaine Innovations as these two took

at the start in Le Havre on Saturday his main target was to be among the top monohulls at the end of the 4,500-mile run to Cartagena, Colombia, knowing that most of the opposition were 60-footers.

Yesterday he was disputing

the more westerly option after a rough rounding of Ushant. Leading the monohulls are Jean Maurel in Saupiquet and Marc Thiercelin in Somewhere.

The multihull leader, by a long way, was Loick Peyron in Fujicolour, chased by Francis Goyet in Banque Populaire and Paul Vatin in Chausset d'Europe.

— Stuart Alexander

ICE HOCKEY

Devils given boost by Thornton

Steve Thornton helped to steer the champions, Cardiff Devils, to a 6-3 Superleague win over Bracknell Bees on Sunday.

Thornton, who suffered an arm injury last week, was back in action at the earliest opportunity and hit the target after just eight seconds.

Elsewhere, Jamie Steer scored twice for Ayr Scottish Eagles, who managed to complete a well-deserved weekend double over Nottingham Panthers. Having beaten them 4-2 in the Benson and Hedges Cup quarter-final first leg on Saturday, they won 6-3 in their home Superleague encounter the following evening.

Kevin Conway grabbed the first and last goals for Basingstoke Bison in their 4-3 home win over Manchester Storm after overtime.

Conway gave Biso the lead after just 54 seconds and then struck the game-winning goal after two minutes and one second of overtime.

Newcastle Cobras are still pointless after two Superleague games. They lost 4-1 away to Sheffield Steelers, for whom Scott Alliso scored twice.

Brett Stewart scored

for the Cobras whose man

of-the-match, their netminder Wayne Cowley,

was in inspired form

against his former club.

BENSON & HEDGES CUP QUARTER-FINALS: First leg: Ayr 4; Nottingham 2; Newcastle 1; Basingstoke 1; Bracknell 2 Manchester 2.

SUPER LEAGUE: Ayr 6; Nottingham 3; Sheffield 4; Newcastle 1; Basingstoke 4; Manchester 3 (0); Cardiff 6; Bracknell 3.

PHILIPS



Today we publish the latest results of The Independent Fantasy Football League. Due to the weekend's international matches, the player scores remain unchanged and therefore both individual scores and the league table are calculated from all games played until October 5th.

Every time one of your players score you get four points. There are four points for a keeper or a defender every time their team keeps a clean sheet. If a player scores the winning goal, i.e.: if there is a one goal difference in the scoreline, the player scoring the final goal for the winning team is awarded 1 bonus point awarded in addition to standard goal related points. Each successful Assist, a pass judged by our experts to lead directly to a goal, will give a player 3 points. The opinion of our experts on the matter is final. Each player selected and starting a game will be awarded one point.

If a player is given a Yellow Card they lose 1 point, if a player is given a Red Card they lose 3 points. Own goals, either scored or conceded, do not count.

The Premiership Manager that you choose will be awarded 3 points if their real-life team wins, 1 point is awarded if they draw and no points are given if they lose.

Updated player scores and league tables will be published every Tuesday in *The Independent* and repeated the following Sunday in *The Independent on Sunday*.

HOW TO SCORE	
player score	1
clean sheet	4
winning goal	1
successful assist	3
-1 yellow card	1
red card	3
manager's team wins	3
draw	1

INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

OVERALL SCORE CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 8 AUGUST - 5 OCTOBER

LEAGUE TABLE	
CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 8 AUGUST - 5 OCTOBER	
POS	NAME
	TEAM
	POINTS
1	Mr Chris King
1	Mr Phil Tuffer
1	Mr David Evans
1	Mr John Cox
5	Mr S. Srai
6	Mr B. Srai
6	Mr Stewart Scott
6	Mr David Aston
9	Mr Stewart Scott
10	Mr David Baker
11	Mr Martin Pawley
12	Mr Chris Thomas
13	Mr Archer
14	Miss Lisa Wild
15	Mr Michael Rickard
16	Mr Mike Mitchell
16	Mr G. Whitehead
16	The Team Team
16	Mr P. Green
16	Mr Ken Boyce
16	Mr G. Bell
21	Mr K. Brady
21	Mr Brady
23	Mr E. Crowley
23	Mr Trevor Russ
25	Mr Killary
25	Mr J. McCloschan
25	Mr David
29	Mr Abdal Choudi
29	Mr A. Reynolds
30	Mr Tom Lyons
31	Mr J. McCrossan
31	Mr A. Cunningham
33	Mr A. Stannett
34	Mr Steven Man
34	Mr David Baker
36	Mr Chris Thomas
37	Mr Ian Boile
37	Mr A. Wriggote
37	Mr Tom Lyons
37	Mr Tony Brazier
41	Mr Robin Johnson

CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	W	L	VALUE	POS	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	W	L	VALUE	POS	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	W	L	VALUE	POS					
GOALKEEPERS																									
CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 8 AUGUST - 5 OCTOBER																									
454	Anderson	BLA	0	4	25	501	500	Lundström	SOU	0	8	12	670	570	Shapiro	LEE	0	0	15	846	Huckerty	COV	0	14	35
455	Cox	BLA	0	1	10	502	501	Stokes	TOT	0	5	14	670	571	Ribeiro	LEE	0	16	15	847	Solnedri	COV	0	12	15
303	Seaman	ARS	0	36	40	503	502	McGinn	BLA	0	1	10	671	572	Lightbourne	COT	0	2	15	848	Lightbourne	COT	0	14	15
304	Laddie	ARS	0	10	10	504	503	McGinn	BLA	0	2	10	672	573	Frederick	CRY	0	14	15	849	Frederick	CRY	0	1	10
305	Manninger	ARS	0	10	10	505	504	McGinn	BLA	0	3	29	673	574	Frederick	CRY	0	1	10	850	Frederick	CRY	0	1	10
306	Wolfe	ARS	0	10	10	506	505	McGinn	BLA	0	0	13	674	575	Frederick	CRY	0	1	10	851	Frederick	CRY	0	1	10
307	Watson	BAR	0	11	10	507	506	McGinn	BLA	0	0	13	675	576	Frederick	CRY	0	2	10	852	Frederick	CRY	0	2	10
308	Loose	BAR	0	11	10	508	507	McGinn	BLA	0															

Welsh clubs have hardly distinguished themselves in either European competition



ALAN
WATKINS
ON
RUGBY

The story goes that a party of my fellow countrymen journeyed to Paris for Wales' match with France. One of their number went missing and, after some argument, his companions returned home without him, reasoning that he was a big boy who could look after himself. When he duly turned up early the following week, his friends asked him what had happened. "I can tell you this much," he replied. "The art of sexual intercourse is in its infancy in Ystradgynlais."

On the evidence so far provided by the two European competitions, I am tempted to say the same of the art of rugby union football in Wales generally. For the Welsh clubs

have hardly distinguished themselves either in the Heineken Cup or in the European Conference. Trns, Cardiff, Llanelli and Pontypridd are all in the last 11 of the former competition, England being represented by four clubs (Bath, Harlequins, Leicester and Wasps), France by three (Brive, Pau and Toulouse) and Scotland by one (Glasgow). But of the five clubs certain to go through to the quarter-finals, three are English, two French.

There will be at least one Welsh club at this stage of the competition, because Cardiff meet Llanelli in a play-off at Cardiff. Fifty years ago, when Cardiff fielded their greatest side (even though they would

not have been fit enough or big enough to last out today), such a meeting would have drawn a crowd of 20,000. They will be lucky to see half that number in these supposedly professional times.

Llanelli I have not seen this season. They seem to have been having an up-and-down time, slightly luckier than their neighbours, Swansea, who appear to have become a walking journalistic cliché as "the perpetual under-achievers of the competition".

I did, however, see Cardiff play Bourgoin in France, on French television. Just as I can tell you that Colomiers is a suburb of Toulouse and not, as the BBC seems to imagine,

of Paris, so also can I supply the information of where Bourgoin is actually situated. It is 44 kilometres east of Lyons and its full name is Bourgoin-Jallieu.

The team put up a spirited performance against Cardiff and were responsible for most of the open play. Cardiff relied on the boot of Lee Jarvis, who saw them home by one undeserved point. The Welsh side played poorly.

I was in France for a friendly Brive against Pontypridd encounter, but managed to catch only the televised excerpts. It seemed to me clear that the nonsense was started by the Pontypridd No 8 Dale McIntosh.

It was equally evident,

though I was not there and may have been misled by the French press, that later that evening some Pontypridd players and supporters entered a bar where numerous Brive players were enjoying a quiet drink and proceeded to belabour them, as a consequence of which, several of them had to be removed to hospital and were unfit to face Pontypridd in their subsequent encounter, which turned out to be a draw.

If the facts are as I have stated them, (and I have read nothing to cast any substantial doubt on this version), there is no question in my mind but that Pontypridd should have been expelled from the

competition for this season: not for their behaviour on the field, lamentable though this was, but for their conduct off it, which was quite intolerable. Brive and Bath would then be deemed to have beaten Pontypridd, and, depending on points difference, one of them would be meeting Swansea in a play-off.

As it is, Brive play Pontypridd in France for a place in the last eight. This may be the one draw that nobody wanted made, but I look forward to the encounter. My prediction is that both sides will be on their best behaviour.

Though I do not unsee anything about Pontypridd's conduct off the field, and what its consequences should can get up to.

have been. I recognise that when a British Isles club side meet a French side on French soil, it must come as something of what is now called a culture shock.

In France, journalists are admitted to the dressing-room. A few years ago I found myself mingling with the players in the steam after Bégles had just beaten Toulouse in the semi-finals of the French Cup. All three members of Bégles' notorious front row, two of whom were later to land themselves in serious international trouble, had been protecting their most vulnerable parts with cricket boxes. That just shows you what these Frenchmen can get up to.

Has the Coca-Cola Cup run out of fizz?

The winners of the Coca-Cola Cup will not qualify for Europe next season, which has taken the gloss off a competition that was already losing its appeal for larger football clubs. Guy Hodgson assesses its future.

The Coca-Cola Cup begins its third round tonight although you would be hard put to find figures of real consequence who care very much. It may still set pulses racing in Hull and Stoke but among the big clubs it is quickly becoming an irksome irrelevance. It is a competition that is out of Europe, out of mind and probably out of time.

Take Ipswich Town. If Manchester United were visiting Portman Road in the FA Cup, Suffolk would be alive with anticipation at seeing Teddy Sheringham, Ryan Giggs etc get a potential come-uppance. The match has sold all 22,000 tickets yet it would be more of a surprise if Alex Ferguson did not field a reserve team.

United's recent attitude to the competition has been ambivalent at best. In 1994 they took an XI to Port Vale that was so short of first-teamers that the home club reported them to the Football League for fielding a weakened side. The fact that United won 2-1 undermined the case and the authorities at Lytham St Annes let the matter drop.

To complicate the issue, seven of the team which included such non-names as Neville, Butt, Beckham, Scholes and Gillespie won the

Double the following season. Susic is the depth of real talent at Old Trafford, if Ferguson fields John Curtis and Michael Clegg tonight who is to say that a) the normal full-backs are fully fit or b) that either will not be established players in 18 months' time.

United had that attitude when the winners of the Coca-Cola Cup still qualified for the Uefa Cup; they are not going to change it now that the fruits of victory will be extra matches offset only by a slim chance of going to Wembley. What will be interesting is how other clubs react.

Newcastle have more reason than most to succeed, as they have not won a major trophy for all Sir John Hall's millions, yet they may use tomorrow night's tie against Hull to help Stuart Pearce and Alessandro Pistone's recuperation from injury. Liverpool will probably leave out Steve McManaman at West Bromwich.

Even Arsenal, who are out of Europe, are lukewarm. Arsène Wenger will rest 11 internationals tonight against Birmingham City including Emmanuel Petit who will have a bone scan today to discover whether he fractured an ankle playing for France on Saturday.

"I don't care if I am criticised," Wenger said. "I work for Arsenal and must do the best job for them, which means giving players the rest that they need. We would like to win the Coca-Cola Cup but it is not a big competition now that Uefa have said there will be no place in Europe at the end of it for the winners."

There is a future for the League Cup, but it is along the lines of a glorified Full Members Cup.

round at the same time as us, decide to field their best sides."

If the clubs are losing interest, then there is evidence to suggest supporters are going the same way too. Manchester City attracted only 12,563 for the home leg against Blackpool in the first round, half their normal attendance, while Bolton could tempt just 6,444 people to the spanking new Reebok Stadium for the visit of Leyton Orient.

The League's solution has been to go to the European Commission in an attempt to have the Uefa Cup place restored although it is unlikely they will succeed as Europe's governing body has already said they will do so if the Premiership is reduced from 20 to 18 clubs. Turkeys are more likely to vote for Christmas than chairmen for a smaller honeypot.

As for Ipswich they can only hope they will not suffer Port Vale's embarrassment and suffer defeat at the hands of youthful Manchester United side their own supporters did not feel were good enough. "I don't think it's in our remit to complain if they field a weakened team," David Rose, Ipswich's secretary said. "The Football League are aware of the situation and I'm sure they would look at it after the game."

And, in all probability, turn a blind eye. The Port Vale match three years ago set a precedent that the League would find hard to ignore. Leading clubs are looking to Europe League as a flat Coca-Cola and the competition is likely to become the preserve of the bottom half of the Premiership downwards.

"I will be very surprised if the other big teams like Manchester United, Liverpool and Newcastle, who are entering this

persuaded to make himself available again, following the decision of the liquidators yesterday to withdraw their appeal against the players' attempts to become free agents.

A tribunal which was meant to decide the issue today has been cancelled and players such as Crompton, who has interested both Salford and Halifax, Paul Davidson, who has signed registration forms for St Helens, and Paul Acheson will be able to start careers elsewhere. With Shaun Edwards and Tony Smith both needing knee operations, Bobbie Goulding was left, when Crompton withdrew, as the only fit scrum-half in the squad.

His latest suspension means that he has not played since 24 August, a gap of almost 10 weeks to the date of the first Test at Wembley on 1 November. Nor was the turbulent Goulding in the most convincing of form before his ban, so going into a Test series without cover for him would have been unthinkable.

— Dave Hindfield



Steve Claridge scored the winning goal in last year's Coca-Cola Cup final replay that took Leicester City into Europe this season. With that reward taken away, however, the competition is losing credibility

Photograph: Michael Steele/Empics

RUGBY LEAGUE

Good news for Goodway as scrum-half Crompton has change of heart

Oldham's players have won the right to play their trade elsewhere, giving Great Britain a boost on the eve of naming their squad to face Australia next month.

The Oldham captain, Martin Crompton, one of the only two scrum-halves in the preparatory squad that will be whittled down to 22 today, had pulled out of contention, saying that he was disillusioned with the game.

However, he has now been

persuaded to make himself available again, following the decision of the liquidators yesterday to withdraw their appeal against the players' attempts to become free agents.

Crompton is an Irish international, but unproven at the highest level. The Great Britain coach, Andy Goodway, was keen to have him available, however, because of a chronic shortage of alternatives.

With Shaun Edwards and Tony Smith both needing knee

operations, Bobbie Goulding was left, when Crompton withdrew, as the only fit scrum-half in the squad.

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— Dave Hindfield

Disgruntled Villeneuve ready to consider leaving Formula One

Whether or not Jacques Villeneuve becomes world champion in the last race of the season, he may not choose to continue racing in Formula One. David Tremayne examines a climactic end to the drivers' championship.

Jacques Villeneuve's chances of keeping the two points he scored for finishing fifth in Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix are remote. Suzuka should have yielded the 26-year-old

French-Canadian the world championship crown, but instead he raced under appeal after receiving a ban for yet another offence of ignoring a yellow caution flag.

The regulations specifically demand that drivers slow down for waved yellow flags, which warn of potential hazards ahead. Villeneuve ignored one in Argentina and another in Imola earlier this year, and when he ignored a third at Monza in September he received a one-race ban, suspended for a probationary period of nine races. When he sped past Jos Verstappen's abandoned Tyrrell on Saturday morning

in Suzuka, again ignoring yellow flags, the international governing body of motor racing, the FIA, banned him from the Japanese Grand Prix and only relented when the Williams team appealed.

The auguries for the success of this appeal are unfavourable, by the most charitable estimate. When Jordan appealed against a one-race ban for Eddie Irvine after an incident in the 1994 Brazilian Grand Prix, the ban was not merely upheld, but tripled. Later that season Michael Schumacher and Benetton appealed against disqualification from the British Grand Prix for ig-

noring the black flag which demands that a driver stop racing immediately. A \$25,000 fine (£14,750) was multiplied by 10, and Schumacher was banned for two races. More recently, Mika Hakkinen raced under appeal in the Belgian Grand Prix following a fuel infringement in practice. When McLaren's appeal was heard, Hakkinen lost his third place and the team's fine was doubled to \$50,000. There is a clear lesson here: mess with the FIA at your peril. It is easier to find Lord Lu-

can than a successful appellant. "We think an appeal was a good idea," Villeneuve insisted, "because

five other drivers did the same thing at the same time on the track. It was important for us to race in Japan, because you never know whether the FIA might allow us to keep the two points, and let me off the suspension."

In the real world this is regarded as little more than folly by Williams, and bound to end in tears. And the incident may not just cost Villeneuve the world title.

Speculation even before Suzuka suggested strongly that he may be having second thoughts about continuing in Formula One. He de- tests the narrow cars which the FIA is introducing for 1998, and their

grooved tyres, and has frequently clashed on the subject with the FIA president, Max Mosley. Above all, he relishes the danger element of motor racing, and has often hinted, publicly and privately to friends, that he might reconsider his future if he lost the thrill of driving. Few drivers really possess the strength of character to walk away when an indulgent and lucrative lifestyle turns sour, but Jacques Villeneuve is enough of a maverick to do just that, regardless of the contract that he has to drive for Williams in 1998.

"Definitely I find it very difficult to accept," he said. "It's a heavy blow

now that we are fighting like this at the end, for the championship."

"We have seen in the past before, in the last race that the man who is a point ahead can afford to be very aggressive with the one who is behind," Williams' technical director, Patrick Head, said on Sunday night, "and if both cars don't finish... We saw that with Damon at Adelaide in 1994. I view that as a deliberate removal of one competitor by another." But the difference is that where Hill plugged on to win his title two years later, there is a real chance that Villeneuve just might choose not to stay around that long.

HOCKEY

Jackson's switch profits Peterborough Town

Steve Jackson, Peterborough Town's new coach from the athletic club across the city, has guided his side to a splendid start to the season, with 16 goals in their opening two games in the Adams East Premier.

Hat-tricks at the weekend from the captain, Mark Britton, and Paul Tancer set up the 8-2 victory against Luton Town with Garry Hales, the new chairman, Geoff Fletcher, insisting that Prescot have no debts and will fight for their survival.

— Dave Hindfield

goal of the season from the normally prolific Steve Gregory. Cambridge City are the only other team on maximum points.

Brian Lock was again on form for high-scoring Chichester with a hat-trick in their 7-1 win against Herne Bay to head the ESL South Premier. Henry Stremes, with a brace, and one each from Andrew Savory and Andrew Richards completed the rout.

City of Portsmouth, re-

gated from the National League, are making a determined bid to regain their senior status. Visiting Southampton, they beat Trojans 6-0.

Another side on maximum points is newly promoted Eastcote, who beat Purley 4-2. Former Slough players Jon Curtis and James Grant, along with Dicky Brittain and Simon Samuel, completed the scoring.

Derek Hodgson and Danny Bolgar replied for Purley.

— Bill Colwill

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RUGBY UNION

Bath deny Rowell takeover rumour as Bristol hit hard times

Rugby union's sugar-daddy investors are showing signs of nerves as their balance sheets slide ever deeper into the red.

With the Allied Dunbar Premiership awash with rumours of takeover bids, rescue packages and impending bankruptcies, Chris Hewett examines the latest upheavals in a volatile financial landscape.

It is Black October in rugby's hard-up heartlands and for the money men in the boardrooms, life at the sharp end of a fledgling professional sport is becoming less and less of a novelty. Bristol announced losses of £486,671 yesterday and later this week, their infinitely better-heeled neighbours from Bath are likely to confess to an operating deficit of around three times that amount. No wonder the entrepreneurs are feeling jittery.

While Bristol insist they are close to securing the sort of seven-figure cash injection that would prevent them going to the wall, senior figures at Bath

are questioning the long-term commitment of Andrew Brownsword, the reclusive greetings card tycoon who bought 75 per cent of the club for £2.5m just over a year ago. Yesterday, Brownsword scotched rumours that he was about to cut and run, but his denial was not enough to quash suggestions of a takeover bid.

Jack Rowell, the former England coach who spent 17 years of his life transforming Bath from hackwater nobodies into the most successful club side in world rugby, is widely believed to be investigating a possible return to the Recre-

ation Ground at the head of a powerful consortium, including a High Street bank and a wealthy local businessman with strong family ties to the club.

"I'm in business-building mode at the moment," said Rowell yesterday. "I've certainly had no discussions with Bath Pic and I do not foresee any imminent involvement on my part. In fact, I'm thoroughly enjoying my break from the game." He is, however, thought to have made Brownsword aware of his interest.

Certainly, the grapevine was talkative enough to force Brownsword's men into issuing

a rapid denial. Tom Sheppard, the club's company secretary, said: "I can categorically say that no meetings have taken place with any potential investor. Neither have we been approached to set up a meeting. Quite simply, Mr Brownsword's share of the club is not for sale. He did not become involved with rugby on a short-term basis."

However, Bath will have to raise extra capital if they are to realise their dream of leaving the cramped, futureless confines of the council-owned Rec and build a purpose-built stadium on some of the disused land in and around the city. Un-

less Brownsword is prepared to pump even more of his vast fortune into the club, a second major financial player will have to be brought on board.

Meanwhile, Arthur Holmes, the nearest thing Bristol have to a Brownsword-style investor, warned that clubs will continue to find it "impossible to equate expenditure and income". He blamed a chaotic fixture list and reduced financial support from the Rugby Football Union as prime causes of Rec and build a purpose-built stadium on some of the disused land in and around the city. Un-

less Brownsword's salary bill escalates by £772,000. By comparison, revenue increased by just £326,000 and it does not require an economics graduate to understand the gravity of that discrepancy. Unsurprisingly, Bristol's auditors have issued a warning.

"New financial backing is now essential," said a spokesman for Kidsons, Impey. "If discussions are unsuccessful and the company is unable to raise the level of finance required to meet short-term capital obligations, the company might be unable to continue operating." Bleak days indeed.

Guusje blow, page 31

BOXING

Wright's brother retires

The brother of Carl Wright, who remains critically ill in hospital after a championship fight on Saturday, has vowed he will give up the sport.

Paul Wright watched his younger brother challenge for the British light welterweight title on the same bill as Nasiru Hamed and Chris Eubank in the Sheffield Arena.

After losing on points to Mark Winters, the 28-year-old collapsed while driving back to Mersyde with his trainer, Colin Moorcroft.

Surgeons at Walton Hospital's neurology unit operated to remove a blood clot on his brain and a spokesman yesterday described the boxer as "critically ill".

Paul, a middleweight, said: "I will never box again. I couldn't put our family through this kind of pain again."

Paul lost a World Boxing Organisation Inter-Continental title challenge earlier this year and said: "I didn't want to retire on a loss but that's it for me now."

Both Paul and Carl, who has been dubbed "The Wildcat", had been pupils at Liverpool's Campion High School and started their boxing careers at Salisbury Amateur Boxing Club. They made their professional debuts in the ring in 1989.

Carl had been preparing for Saturday night's bout in a caravan in Wales. It was his first fight since losing the European title to Denmark's Soren Sondergaard on points almost a year ago.

Carl's wife, who is seven weeks pregnant, was monitoring his progress as he remained critically ill on a life support machine.

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Photograph: Reuter

Italy forced to play game of Russian roulette

The price Italy must pay for failing to win in Rome on Saturday is a two-leg play-off against Russia for the right to join England and Scotland at the World Cup finals. The Republic of Ireland face what might be an easier task, against Belgium. Rupert Metcalf looks ahead to the last laps of the long road to France.

"Russia, along with Croatia and Yugoslavia, were one of the three teams that I did not want to have to face. So I can't say it went well." Those were the words yesterday of Paolo Maldini, the captain of Italy, after the draw in Zurich for the home-and-away play-offs which will conclude the footballing marathon that has been the European qualifying competition for the 1998 World Cup.

The draw could have been far kinder to the Italians, and it has only added to the mood of pessimism which has afflicted the nation after England's draw in Rome on Saturday ensured that Glenn Hoddle's men reached France '98 without having to bother with the play-offs.

Italy must travel to chilly Moscow for the first leg on 29 October, where they will meet a home team keen to gain revenge for a 2-1 defeat to the Italians at last year's European Championship in England.

The Republic of Ireland

will be at home for the first leg of their play-off against Belgium, at Lansdowne Road on Wednesday 29 October. Their last two meetings with the Belgians both ended in draws during the qualifying stages for the 1988 European Championship.

Frank Stapleton and Liam Brady scored in a 2-2 draw in Brussels while the return game in Dublin was a 0-0 stalemate.

But Jack Charlton's team went

on to qualify for the finals, where Ray Houghton's goal brought them a famous triumph against England.

Charlton's successor as the Republic's manager, Mick McCarthy, knows that he will never emerge from big Jack's shadow unless he, too, takes his team to the finals of a major tournament. He insists that the Belgians must not be underestimated.

"The fact that Wales have played Belgium twice in the qualifiers means that we should be able to get a lot of homework done on them," McCarthy said. "Bobby Gould is an old mate of mine. With his assistance, we should be able to know every-

thing about the Belgians before the draw. We didn't want to go to somewhere like Russia or the Ukraine, playing on difficult surfaces with the temperature below freezing point."

"Obviously, we need to be a little cautious in the away match but we will still be going on the attack looking for goals," McCarthy added. "Some of my players are so young they won't have any worries about playing the second leg away."

The Republic will implement the five-day rule in preparation for the first leg. That could rule a number of Irish

players out of important Premiership and First Division games. "We need the full five days' preparation. On this occasion there will be no exceptions to the rule. The players I want will all travel to Dublin," McCarthy vowed.

That could start a "club v country" row. The Premier League has confirmed that all fixtures on the weekend of 25, 26 and 27 October will go ahead as planned. There will be

no clash of interests for the return legs on 15 or 16 November, however, as there is no Premiership programme that weekend.

The draw managed to keep the Balkan countries apart. Croatia will be at home to Ukraine in the first leg, while Yugoslavia travel to Hungary, probably the weakest of the eight, on 29 October. The Yugoslavs will be strong favourites to reach France but Croatia

face a tough task against a rapidly improving Ukraine side based on Dynamo Kiev's talented club squad.

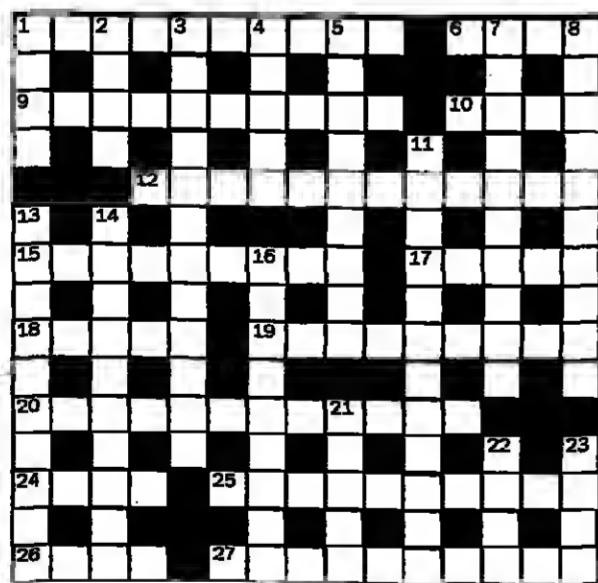
Coca-Cola loses fizz, page 30

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3429, Tuesday 14 October

By Acland

Monday's Solution



ACROSS

1 Fellow in charge notes nothing American is false (10)
6 One goes sideways, right into taxi (4)
9 After short note one's engaged in moderate contract (10)
10 Italian writer retains hard copy (4)
12 In decline a man gets old and manipulated (5-7)
15 Rage aroused by gibe of relative (5-4)
17 Join European, rejected, forsaken (5)
18 About to beat soundly a person with outmoded ideas (5)
19 Able to struggle with the books of the church? (9)

20 Range of car presented by US state (6,6)
24 Stuck in unpaid leisure? (4)
25 Maybe lessen a POW with his gun taken away? (10)
26 One leaves a terminal where a gathering forms? (4)
27 Duly infer changes will keep a number cool (10)

7 DOWN
1 Note listeners apprehension (4)
2 Prompt to cover British figure (4)
3 I'd something to go to club, say, which confirms who I am (8,4)
4 Putting on cool white coat and spending day gambling (5)

5 Mutual time finally expires when this could be given? (9)
7 Instruction suggesting danger in recreation area? (4,6)
8 Liberal-minded clergy will be material (10)
11 I'll represent what our partner stands for (12)
13 So a trigger could lead to violence? (10)
14 Produced flow about rotter being rich (4-6)
16 A French firm will show lack of care (9)
21 Two very high-ups and a snake (5)
22 Incline to be tuppence short in the old shilling (4)
23 Describing result when hay's turned? (14)

5 LOCATE SPOTLESS
6 E A O U E N X
7 A S S I S T I O N A L I E R
8 T H E D O M A N
9 H E E O A L O N E P L A S T E
10 E M P I C I O D
11 E N T U R C E
12 Y U D
13 O A B
14 A N T H E M F O R M I S T E R
15 I N D I E N T I C T Y T H U G
16 P W I G I O W H
17 O S A N A H A N G A B O U T
18 F L I N G U K R
19 F U N G I S H G O R D O N

CRICKET

Hasan shines as 'youngest' double centurion

Pakistan's Hasan Raza, who became the youngest Test player when he faced Zimbabwe last year aged 14 years and 27 days, became the youngest scorer of a first-class double century yesterday - or maybe just one of the youngest because the absence of a birth certificate has cast doubt on his age.

He made an unbeaten 214, supposedly at the age of 15 years and 215 days, playing for

Karachi Whites against Bahawalpur in the national championship, which would break the 13-year record of another Pakistani, Ijaz Ahmed.

But doubts about his exact age have been present ever since he played in the Under-15 World Cup in England two years ago. Ten other boys originally selected for that squad were found to be over-age although Hasan was cleared. Six

of the Pakistan Under-19 party to the West Indies the same year were found to be too old.

After his debut against Zimbabwe in the second Test at Faisalabad - he scored 27 in his only innings - the Pakistan Cricket Board said medical tests showed him to be "about 15".

Majid Khan, the Pakistan Cricket Board chief executive, has said they do not accept Hasan's age.

MORSE

The first bug to invade a computer was crushed to death in the jaws of a relay in 1945

Bugs (albeit of a somewhat different type) are still a part of computing today. No system is immune without special protection.

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